

# Doctrinal Handbook

The Mill Street Mission, Dorchester, Dorset.

A non-denominational Christian outreach in the poorest part of town.



## Roman Wood Christian Fellowship

### Doctrinal Handbook: A Practical Note

These notes are compiled for The Roman Wood Christian Fellowship. They have been issued to the believers who associate with this group in order to form the basis of a handbook of faith and practice. We do not limit the distribution of these notes or recognise copyright in respect of the same, however we ask that those who are not directly associated exercise Christian restraint where they disagree and that they approach us first in order to clarify our position where insufficient information has been presented. We will willingly enter into correspondence with other believers and where we are found to be in error, retract and establish the Biblical position.

These were subjects that were felt relevant at the time (1985 - 1992) and so it is not an exhaustive list.

#### Where a Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:

- CEV Contemporary English Version
- Darby John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV Easy to Read Version
- Geneva 1587 Version
- GNB Good News Translation
- GW God's Word
- ISV International Standard Version
- KJV Kings James Version
- LEB Lexham English Version
- LITV Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX Septuagint
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in *italic script*. All versions can be found in e-Sword. e-Sword is a fast, effective and free way to study the Bible. e-Sword is feature rich and user friendly with more capabilities than you would expect in a free Bible study app. Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/> Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

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## Baptism

Baptism is a conscious decision taken by a new believer to declare his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody can undertake to make this declaration on behalf of another (i.e. godparents), hence infant 'christening' cannot be passed off as Baptism. Faith in The Person of Christ and assurance of His forgiveness is a prerequisite of Baptism.

Baptism means 'dip', and the Bible shows people going into water rather than water being brought to the person. We do not therefore accept sprinkling as a form practised by New Testament believers, neither do we countenance the practice of baptising anyone where a personal testimony of saving faith is absent (infant baptism).

Baptism embraces the following ideas:

1. It is an act of obedience to The Lord. *Act 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
2. It is a Christian privilege. *Act 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*
3. It can be commanded upon profession of faith. *Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*
4. It may take place before or after the reception of The Holy Spirit. *Act 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*
5. It is the testimony of a clear conscience. *1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*
6. It is the outward sign of an inward transformation. *Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

7. It marks the cutting off of the old life. *Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?* Because it symbolises death, burial and resurrection it requires someone else to perform the act, as no one can bury themselves. *Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

It does not require the permission of a church or an elder or deacon to validate it.

## Thanksgiving

This activity should be developed as part of Christian growth. We give thanks at our meal-times, for our safety, for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for our rulers, indeed, at all times. Thanksgiving forms a vital area of our prayer life. *Php 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God..... Col 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*

## Food and Drink

Jesus turned water into wine, not wine into water. *Joh 2:7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. Joh 2:8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. Joh 2:9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

Wine was taken at the common meal and is part of the Lords' Table. Wine was also used medicinally. *1Ti 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*

The Bible does not condemn the use of alcohol but urges that we avoid excess, as it does with overeating. *Deu 21:20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.* The Bible does not define statutory levels above which one is declared drunk and below which one is declared sober any more than it declares an amount of food which if exceeded constitutes gluttony. The individual must exercise his faith to determine what a reasonable intake is.

This should take into account the following:



1. Alcohol and meats must be used with a consciousness of causing offence to the weaker brother and setting a bad example to the unbeliever. *Rom 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*
2. The individual must develop sensitivity to the effects upon his constitution and personality, particularly when it affects self control.
3. Drunkards and gluttons do not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. *1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

## Church Membership

Membership of The Kingdom of God and Membership of The Church of Christ are one and the same. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God..... Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

There are those who make rules and rituals (like freemasons for their society) for becoming a member of a local church fellowship but the Bible knows nothing of this imposition. If the local church truly associates itself with the Universal Church, that is The General Assembly of the Firstborn whose names are written in the Book of Life, it is presumptuous arrogance to demand more than Lord. *Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.*

We are welcomed into The Church by Christ, who requires that we repent and believe in Him. *Rom 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand..... Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Act 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Act 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

Do not believe those who add to God's word and demand an initiation or ritual that is unfounded in scripture.

Men will always attempt to embellish scripture and add their own wisdom, as if God had in some measure not exercised sufficient competence in giving us those things necessary for faith and practice. In reality 'church membership' is often a pretext to cover up for a more general incompetence in the ministry. It covers a failure to discern true faith in an individual, the inability to exhort and confront directly and a lack of confidence in Christ and His brethren.

## Tithing

Tithing in the Old Testament was an expression of gratitude to The Lord and a means of supporting the Priesthood and rituals of the Mosaic Law. *Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee. Num 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

Tithing is not imposed on the believer under the New Covenant and any appeals to the Old Testament practice are not valid, particularly since tithing is inextricably linked to other aspects of legal obedience such as the observations of new moons. No writer in the New Testament appeals to the Mosaic Law of tithing to encourage charity and liberality among the saints (2 Corinthians 9). Tithing arises from an incorrect understanding of the relationship between the two Covenants.

This does not mean that Christians are to be mean in their support of what is truly the work of the Lord. If the need arises a Christian may be required to give much more than a legal tenth of his gains.

In fact the New Testament is more demanding than the Old Testament and we should be ready to meet needs without being prompted by law. As such charity, not tithing is one of the marks of a Christian. *2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver..... 1Jn 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

## Christmas

This festival derived from a compromise between paganism and Christianity. The pagan Saturnalia was taken and 'sanctified' by believers as Christmas.

Many Christians fail to examine the origins of their practices and so fall into habits that on close examination of scripture cannot be justified. Rather than attempt to justify the 'status quo', believers should adopt the positive and Biblical attitude of developing their ideas from the Bible. By this we mean that we should search the scriptures first and develop practices that are in harmony with those of the Bible (i.e. the early church).

If we do this we shall never find 'Christmas' or anything vaguely resembling it. If we are concerned to teach the truth and change people's attitudes, beliefs and practices how can we remain true to the faith? We do not encourage religious beliefs and practices that are mere imaginations and extensions of pagan ideas.

## Birthdays

As with Christmas, birthday celebrations are not seen to be practised by Christians. The pagans celebrate birthdays and in the Bible the occasions that they are recorded cause misfortune to some individual (the death of Pharaoh's baker and John the Baptist). *Gen 40:20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants..... Mat 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Mat 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. Mat 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.*

It is of interest that the pagans who celebrate birthdays **give** presents rather than receive presents.

If Christians were to find any cause of celebration it would be in their New Birth rather than their natural birth into sin and death. Yet here again many believers are led by the World rather than by Christ and His Word.

## Sabbath

The Hebrew word means rest. It is used of God's rest after the Creation. Because God does

something is no immediate grounds for following suit but the Sabbath did become part of the Hebrew ritual with severe punishments for failure to comply and God made it part of the constitution of the law by enshrining it in the Ten Commandments. *Exo 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

Christians often fail to grasp the true meaning of the Sabbath which pointed forward to the true rest that would be obtained by believers in Christ. *Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Heb 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*

The New Testament never imposes the Old Testament Sabbath as an institution to be made a weekly observance by Christians. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Indeed we are warned against resorting to the law for perfection. We have entered into the true Sabbath by our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A weekly observance is in reality a practical denial of this fact.

It is of interest to note that 'sabbatarians' do not wholly comply with the requirements of the Old Testament, for example the mandatory death penalty for non-compliance and the observance of land Sabbaths and Jubilees. They give no sound reasons for their liberal interpretation of the Old Testament law and as such are self condemned law breakers if judged by Moses.

This view does not mean that Christians do not have periods of rest.

## Evolution

Evolution as commonly understood means the progressive derivation of life by molecular modifications and processes that over epochs gave rise to different species of living organisms, including man, without the application of a conscious intelligence.

Christians must appreciate that it is a philosophical concept and that there are no proven scientific mechanisms to support the ideas of generation and change necessary for the process. Indeed the ideas associated with this notion of organic evolution, embracing the concept of the survival of the fittest are in conflict with state welfare directed at helping the weaker members of society. Theory and practice are at odds!

Christians accept the Biblical record of direct creation and evolution within species (Genesis 1). By this we mean that 'dog kind' may develop different breeds but that these are all bounded by the initial declaration of the species.

Rather than enter into specious pseudo scientific arguments with evolutionists that often display a compromise with unbelieving scientific methods and practices, Christians should concentrate on the philosophical and moral implications of the evolutionary theory. The consequences of organic evolution are a society without absolute moral guidance and hence no absolute basis for right and wrong. There are no grounds for social cohesion other than self interest. Common good can only be defined by the most powerful social group and therefore values will change from generation to generation.

This can be readily illustrated by the changes in attitude towards abortion, homosexuality, divorce and a whole host of other important subjects. The Bible gives us a single standard, consistent in all generations, because our Creator established standards at the creation consistent with his purpose for His creation. *Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

## Films/Entertainment

Many Christians will justify films as harmless entertainment or will group the subject material with other forms of portrayal that contain a sinful element and endeavour to justify them as no worse than any other subject. We suggest that the believer develop his own conscience with respect to this subject by considering the following points.

1. What is entertainment and is there a place for it in your Christian life?
2. How does the material edify and profit you?
3. Are you filling up gaps in your life the easy way?
4. Is the subject matter of the film an accurate or misleading representation of Christian Truth?  
(The source of occult powers in films is seldom identified and consequently misrepresent and mislead the ignorant, and young in the faith?)
5. Are you exercising parental oversight in the material you allow your children to indulge in?

## Fiction

This should be examined under the former heading. There is a tendency to draw out the subject material in books.

## Magic Shows

The first question to ask is “has it any connection with satanic powers?” If it has it is definitely to be avoided. Egypt had its sorcerers who performed similar feats to Moses but he was acting under Divine instruction and acknowledged the source of his power to The Lord.

Sleight of hand has a certain attraction and audiences are often aroused by curiosity to determine how the conjuror performs the illusion. The Christian must examine whether such apparent deceit is harmful. Many sporting activities employ ruses to distract opponents in order to gain an advantage in a game (wrong footing or feinting).

## Observance of Days

Many people observe days and attach significance to one day above another. Romans chapter 14 teaches us to exercise restraint in condemning people for this action, however, all Christians should examine the reason why then fall into this practice. Among such days we include Christmas, Easter, birthdays, Sabbaths and Saints days. There are no Biblical grounds for encouraging these observations under the New Covenant. They are the practices of the Old Covenant or inventions.

Christians occasionally respond to group pressure and sentimentality, temporarily and conveniently shelving principles in order to gratify their flesh. This is a dishonest approach to Christianity and if it were continued into other areas would shipwreck their Faith. Christians should see that many of these celebrations were the product of a compromise between Christianity and paganism. Christmas was the result of an attempt to sanctify the pagan saturnalia. There is no scriptural indication that a pagan practice can be made acceptable by changing its name, however well meaning the idea.

While we do not judge those who continue in the observance of days, we regard it as our duty and right, to question the reasons of those who do and to encourage them to adopt a biblical view.

## Fasting

There is only one official fasting day in the Old Testament namely the Day of Atonement. *Lev 16:29 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: Num 29:7 And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein:*

The word fast is not used but is implied in the term "afflict (or humble) your souls". *Psa 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom..... Isa 58:5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?*

The Hebrew word for fast means to cover the mouth, hence the abstinence from food and drink. It is observed for many reasons:

1. To obtain Divine guidance. *Ezr 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance..... Jdg 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.*
2. To intercede. *2Sa 12:16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.*
3. To seek Divine assistance. *2Ch 20:3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*
4. In preparation for confession to God. *Dan 9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*
5. Preparatory to repentance. *1Sa 7:2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. 1Sa 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you,*

*and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. 1Sa 7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. 1Sa 7:5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. 1Sa 7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. 1Ki 21:7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.*

## Church (Buildings)

The term church is often applied to the meeting place of believers. This is not the Biblical definition which refers to the people of God as the Church. *Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved..... Act 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*

This has led people to associate a building with the dwelling place of God rather than indwelling the person of the believer.

In the New Testament, the regular meeting place is the home, hence the scripture refers to the church in the House. *1Co 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house..... Col 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

In an attempt to recover the Biblical position, the term "House church" has been adopted, but "house meeting" is more accurate.

Men attempt to justify a dedicated building on the grounds of necessity for accommodating large numbers of believers. This approach was not adopted by the early Christians, with good reason. Believers have a duty to provide an organised teaching base with pastoral oversight, together with the coordinated exercise of the gifts of The Spirit. Large numbers can inhibit the exercise of gifts and discourage growth and outreach by placing control in the hands of a few able souls.

We must have the courage to expand. This is very similar to the process in nature whereby cells grow and divide. They replicate, carrying all the genetic information to enable a new and identical growth to



begin. However much we desire to maintain fellowship with our brethren the expansion of the Kingdom is our primary aim. *Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

We shall have eternity to spend with each other.

In order to grow we must learn to develop the gifts and callings in the local assembly. *1Co 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

There is an individual responsibility to encourage both personal and corporate growth. We should not become complacent and reliant upon the elders and deacons.

## Ministers

By ministers we mean apostles, pastors and teachers, deacons, evangelists and prophets. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

In a general sense all believers may serve the needs of their brethren and therefore could be called ministers. *Joh 12:2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*

Yet there is a particular calling by God to certain individuals to a regular office to meet a particular service, "the building up of the body of Christ, for the work of the ministry". They are in this sense the architects of growth. Their aim is to prepare others to function in the body of Christ. *Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

Ministers are "called" by God. *1Co 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother..... Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

This is a personal directive from the Lord to function in a clearly defined area. In response some individuals immediately apply for a place in a bible college. These institutions mean well, but they are a denial of the power of God to train up men and women from within the local assembly. *1Pe 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards*

*of the manifold grace of God.* In fact they practically deny that godly ability and highlight the inability of the local assembly.

A man embarking upon a ministry should pause to examine the structure of the organisation to which he is applying and why he cannot find that resource in his own assembly. As believers we endeavour to conform to Biblical methods and teach God's truth but why do we fail to do so here? Are we fearful and unbelieving? Do we suspect that God cannot direct us as well as a college? Are we failing to resolve the deficiencies within our assembly?

There is no occasion where a man is "ordained" an elder by another man in the New Testament by the laying on of hands. Ordination or calling is the act of God. The Church of England (a non-Biblical body) believes in Apostolic succession, and have designed a ritual for the recognition of its "priests". They have designed their own terms of reference for recognition. Christians should not succumb to this group pressure. They answer to God not to men, and so should exercise biblical discernment and have the courage to stand upon His word.

A man is a teacher because God has equipped him for this role. *Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Rom 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Rom 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Of course the learning process is continual and he will develop his calling. A pastor has a care for the sheep of God because it was divinely given. He cannot expect men to give him the gift yet he likewise will develop the pastoral skills when the calling is given.

It is a timely warning to the churches that they should reappraise their condition. If the foundations are laid incorrectly then the structure that is built upon them will not resemble the true church of God. The function and growth of that body will move further away from the normal Christian church into a mutant crippled copy. The cornerstone is Christ and His word and we reject Him at our peril!

## Desirability and Necessity of Eldership

Our conclusion is that although an assembly can exist without an eldership, in that state it is not a properly functioning church after the New Testament model.

This can be drawn from Acts (where Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church) and Titus. Titus is particularly persuasive on this point as the instruction is to put in order something which is lacking. Again the instruction is to make sure that an eldership is established in every place. *Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch..... Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

It seems clear that the eldership arose from within the local assembly and that from these and various other scriptures, a plurality of eldership (more than one elder) would be the norm. *Act 20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.....Php 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

Scripture is a little less clear on the exact procedure used for arriving at the eldership. It should not be taken from the fact that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders that this can only happen in the presence of an apostle. There is no evidence that Titus was an apostle and although it can be argued that his mandate had the backing of an apostolic command, since the command is in scripture, we can equally apply it to ourselves.

The word used for 'ordain' in Titus comes from a word which means to 'stretch forth the hand'. From this comes the idea of pointing out, election or appointment by show of hands. We believe it would be wrong to take this as suggesting elders are voted into a position or that there would be an 'eldership election contest' as nowhere else in scripture are those who preside over God's people voted into position.

While different commentators are at considerable variance over the methodology of establishing elders (usually because they are working from within an already existing order), certain observations are relevant. In the two cases given, in the process of selecting elders the parties involved were the apostles (Paul and Barnabas) or their delegate (Titus) and the church. There was also a show of hands which served some function. The possibilities would seem to be that either the apostles (or their delegate) raised their hand(s) or that the assembly alone raised their hands or that both parties raised their hands.

If only Paul and Barnabas or Titus raised their hands it would suggest that a church cannot arrive at an eldership without outside supervision. On the other hand it should be remembered that at the time the necessity for eldership within the body of believers did not exist as a piece of scripture

(although the synagogue practice may have suggested a model). It may just have been that as Paul and Barnabas went on their way planting assemblies they ensured that elders were appointed while they were still present. Similarly in Crete, Titus was left behind and given the role of implementing the word to appoint elders in his locale. In our case, since we do have the scripture which tells us that it is needful for elders to be appointed it is surely incumbent on us to implement the scripture without awaiting the arrival of an apostle or his delegate.

If it is possible to appoint elders without the presence of an apostle or delegate from outside the body, this leaves a second possibility that the church raised their hands to signify their acknowledgement of the elders. There is a logic to this in as much as the local church would have far more opportunity to assess the behavioural qualifications for eldership than the itinerant Paul, Barnabas and Titus. It also avoids the slightly ridiculous idea that Titus alone signified his approval of the local elders by raising his hand whilst the assembly looked on.

To summarise as to how this affects the Roman Wood Christian Fellowship, although the church does not cease to be a church in the absence of an eldership, it can reasonably be supposed that if the church is to have a future it is essential that an eldership should arise from within the body in the very near future.

It is not possible to derive from scripture exactly how Paul, Barnabas and Titus proceeded to organise the appointment of elders. Since, however, it is clearly incumbent on us to appoint an eldership we must decide on a way of doing so. In that light it would not be unreasonable for those who have demonstrated the qualities outlined in Titus and Timothy (Titus 1, 1 Tim 3) to put themselves forward, or be encouraged to put themselves forward and that the church as a whole sign their approval by showing their hands.

How are leaders to be recognised and what is a leader?

In themselves

It would seem that it is not in the first instance necessary for a potential leader to recognise himself as such. There are a number of examples in scripture where those who were to lead God's people were initially unaware of or not confident in their ability to do so (Gideon, David, and to a degree, Moses). There should not be a desire for power or pre-eminence for its own sake.

It would be necessary that once a leader has been made aware of his capability to lead (a prompting which could come from God or man, for the latter Jethro would be an example), that he has the desire to serve (both God and the church) and that he rigorously examines himself to see if he conforms to the New Testament requirements for eldership.

By the church (i.e. is there a formal acknowledgement?)

It would seem that a church should be able to recognise those called and fitted to lead (for example, the church is told to "...esteem those who labour amongst you..."). It also seems that they would have shown their abilities (certainly deacons are to have been tried and proven). Some form of acknowledgement (see arguments regarding showing of hands) would seem to be desirable so that it is clear where everyone stands.

This raises the practical question of "what happens if all of those present do not accept some or all of those who offer themselves up as leaders?" This question is not dealt with in scripture, suggesting that the ideal is that the potential leaders should examine themselves closely and only put themselves forward if they are confident that they fit the scriptural role to such a degree that only the mischievous would have grounds for objection.

What is clearly not possible is to continue in a situation where one group of people will accept one elder, another group a second elder and perhaps another group a third. At that stage the church would clearly no longer be able to function as one body. It does seem possible that where there is disagreement over a judgement of fitness to a role (based on past record) a division is possible. We take this from the case where Paul and Barnabas differed over John Mark. They chose to go their separate ways and there is no indication that they were condemned for doing so or that either ministry was invalidated. Equally if within the eldership there were differences in aims or directions which could not be harmonized a split might be the only solution.

How is leadership to be encouraged?

The capacity to lead should be developed by encouraging gifts and abilities to flourish. This requires that people are tried and proven by being given tasks within their capabilities ("he who is faithful in little...") and that those already in authority are prepared to relinquish some areas of responsibility, and to even see themselves "overtaken" in some areas.

The existing leadership should be encouraged by acknowledgement in its work, by tangible reward, and by the faith/trust response (peitheo - translated obedience) of the flock.

Where they do not measure up to the biblical standard, what action is to be taken and by whom?

Scripture shows that where sin is involved (and there are witnesses, 1 Tim 5) that a public rebuke would be made. Presumably this action would be the responsibility of whoever became aware of the sin.

How are leaders removed?

In scripture one does not actually see leaders being removed by the flock although God can clearly remove a leader from a situation of His own accord.

If a leader was habitually falling short in one of the conditions necessary for eldership his ministry might well be impaired, it would right for him to withdraw from functioning as an elder until that was corrected.

In the case of a 'wolf' amongst the flock the sheep would not hear his voice (John 10) and would remove themselves from him. Effectively this would be hearing and following Christ rather than hearing and following the 'wolf'.

Finally, presumably one cannot be forced to remain in a role and so a loss of desire, or infirmity may eventually lead to a cessation of function. It might also bring in to question the calling in the first place.

## Ordination of Women

We recognise that a woman, a sister in Christ has a role in the assembly of believers. She is not a passenger but part of the Body of Christ and may be endowed with spiritual gifts. Philip had four daughters who prophesied. *Act 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.* There is however one area that has been forbidden to them and this was denied from creation, namely the role of pastor. "I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp the authority of a man".

We have not evolved equal roles as man and woman by the process of natural selection. We are not dealing with evolution or cultural expediency when determining the unique roles of men and women. Our belief is drawn from the Biblical history of creation declared in the book of Genesis. The sin of Eve had consequences which affect the daughters of Eve in our generation. *1Ti 2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 1Ti 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (ἡσυχία) 1Ti 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 1Ti 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*

We regard the claim of any woman to be called to the pastorate or eldership as a deception. We do not dispute that they may have a desire to contribute to the edification of the saints, but we take issue with their interpretation when it leads them towards a non-Biblical fulfilment in a pastoral role.

We accept that the Office of a deacon may be fulfilled by a man or a woman but we do not see this office as one leading and directing the assembly of God. *1Ti 3:11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.* The role of a deacon is one of practical service designed to meet certain expediencies in the daily needs of the saints.

## Head Coverings

This was not a cultural phenomenon of Corinth. This is proved by Paul's argument derived from Creation and the corresponding role of woman in relation to a man as declared by God. *1Co 11:9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.* It is not an imposition designed to repress a sister in Christ but a privilege whereby she declares her femininity and status.

The current trends of "liberation" and equality are satanic in that they are systematically undermining the authority of God and Christ. If we desire to see the Church functioning as God intended it will only happen if we adopt the principles that He gave us. *Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:* These are clearly outlined in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

The following points demand our consideration:

1. A head covering is not a fashion garment, i.e. a hat or bonnet. Hats have no functional value in a house hence we are speaking about an object with spiritual significance.
2. The covering as specified in Corinthians acts as a cover for the hair not as something that sits on the head. Coverings must cover!
3. The woman's hair was given in the natural as a distinctive glory and if she takes this to heart she will also endeavour to increase that glory by growing it unto the Lord. *1Co 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?* It is of interest to note that the ritual of the Nazarite hair was the only part of man or woman that was permitted to be burned upon the altar of the burnt offering. *Num 6:18 And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.* Hair had a particular value in the eyes of God.

4. It is an example of obedience to the unseen participants of corporate worship, namely the angels. *1Co 11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels*
5. It displays the creative order of Christ, man and woman all in their rightful position. *1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*
6. It confirms the belief in direct creation as opposed to organic evolution. *1Co 11:9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.*
7. Men are to emphasise the distinction of the women by maintaining short hair. *1Co 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?*
8. Women who refuse to cover their hair are regarded as shameful and deserve to have their heads shaved. If they will not be shaved they must cover. *1Co 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

The question will be asked "what then constitutes long hair and what form should a covering take?" In answer to these questions we direct the individual to exercise their conscience and not merely accept a directive based upon linear measurements.

For guidance we give the following pointers:

1. Long hair must enable the woman to distinguish her from a man.
2. How long can she grow her hair? Is she limited by fashion, group pressure, or a physical constraint due to a constitutional disability?
3. What motivates the design of the covering? Is it simplicity, functionality or fashion?

## Marriage

Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman designed to mirror the relationship between Christ and the Church. *Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* The relationship is one of mutual agreement subject to the consent of the parents and satisfying the condition that both parties are free from an obligation to another partner. *Exo 22:17 If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.*

The sexual act does not constitute a marriage, if the aforementioned conditions are not met. An illicit sexual act is termed fornication or adultery and is an indication that the parties involved are unwilling to meet God's terms and conditions.



The Christian must have the courage to re-examine the Biblical perspective of marriage despite the seeming conformity of public opinion and tradition to the Biblical concept. The State in the United Kingdom has made no law requiring that a couple register their marriage. A "common law" marriage carries recognisable obligations in civil law, however we are obliged to conform to God's law. Before we rush in to the common pattern of "church weddings", "registry office weddings", ceremonies, and honeymoons we must read the scripture and see what God demands of us. We follow Him along other paths so let us see where He leads us in this.

We make the following observations:

1. We have no duty to conform to the State;
  - a. where it is not required
  - b. where the State fails to uphold biblical principles.
2. We have no obligation to worldly traditions.
3. No man has been given the authority to join two people together in marriage, neither can a man declare a marriage void. *Mat 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*
4. No religious ceremony or ritual has been defined in scripture as part of the marriage process.
5. A marriage is not declared valid because a minister of religion or a registrar is present to witness it.
6. A marriage feast or celebration is the biblical accompaniment to marriage as a celebration of the union (John 2).
7. The prospective partners must be equally yoked. This means that a believer should not contract a marriage with an unbeliever.
8. It is a covenant of companionship. *Mal 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*

## Divorce

Divorce is the unilateral or bilateral declaration by two people that they no longer desire their union and obligations to continue. They are declaring that their marriage has come to an end. This will occur in the natural course of events when a partner dies but there is a cause which is divinely recognised during the life of the partners, namely fornication or adultery.

By New Testament standards the Older Testament was liberal regarding the grounds for divorce.

Under Moses, and "for the hardness of means hearts" they could dispatch their wives for trivialities. *Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.* If they were not pleased they could obtain a writing of divorce except where they had forced the woman into a sexual act and had the fathers consent for the relationship to stand. In this circumstance the marriage stood for life. *Deu 22:28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Deu 22:29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.*

The disciples appear to be taken aback by our Lords statement abrogating the Mosaic concession. They respond by declaring that the restrictions now applied make it better not to marry, however celibacy is a gift of God and marriage is the normal state for mankind. *Mat 19:10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.*

Where there is an unequal yoke, such as when one partner is converted, they are obligated to continue together. The believer is not encouraged to depart. *1Co 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:*

## Visions and Guidance

Visions have many purposes;

1. Clarification of doctrine.
2. Revelation of purpose.
3. Directive for actions.
4. Warnings and encouragement.

They are normative for the church and a sign of the last day, having been present from the creation. *Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:* They are associated with the mission of the church and particularly with those who have oversight.

The New Testament is not vague about guidance and does not use phrases such as "pray that we will find the Lords will in this matter" or "Lord help us recognise our calling". "Let us pray about it" is often a statement of unwillingness to act in the face of biblical revelation or of ignorance of a Biblical precedent in problem solving.

It is possible to make godly decisions based on proven moral principles that will accord with the will of God. *1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 1Co 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 1Co 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 1Co 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 1Co 6:6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 1Co 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 1Co 6:8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. 1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

God has given us authority and wisdom. *Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven..... Jas 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

There are therefore areas of life where we have freedom under God to act and that such decisions are endorsed by God because they have been funded from His wisdom. Wisdom is spiritually opportunistic. *Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.* Visions are not designed to supplement sloth or wilful ignorance of God's word.

Spiritual guidance is not to be equated with personal infallibility. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

Jesus promised us spiritual guidance and we tread a cautious path because the Holy Spirit does not always override our wrong actions. *Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

Can we find some principles from which to operate?

1. We must test the source of the prompting or guidance. *1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Peter's fallibility was due to the fact that he disregarded what God had already laid down as a principle for action. *Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Paul led Peter back to the will of God.
2. Can we trust our feelings and emotions? We cannot disregard this psychological component to our actions. Peter's mental state in Gethsemane made him vulnerable. *Mat 26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* Fatigue can make cowards of us all. What can we do to guard against this? Learn to recognise physical symptoms in yourself (tiredness, hunger, PMS etc), exercise caution and be slow to arrive at decisions and conclusions in such a state.
3. Emotions may be provoked by ungodly desires. Samson desired a Philistine woman. *Jdg 14:1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Jdg 14:2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Jdg 14:3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. Jdg 14:4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.* Although God was using it as an occasion against the Philistines the end does not in human terms justify the means. *Rom 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man).* Samson betrayed his trust and died!
4. Avoid snap decisions if possible but do not use this as an excuse to avoid coming to an answer. *Deu 17:4 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: Deu 17:12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.* Biblical decision making will improve with the acquisition of Divine knowledge.
5. Dreams require verification, and it comes in at least two forms. It comes to pass. *Gen 41:47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. Gen 41:48 And*

*he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. Gen 41:49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. Gen 41:50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. Gen 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. Gen 41:52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. Gen 41:53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.*

This may be so for a sinful dream. *Deu 13:1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, Deu 13:2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Deu 13:3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* It has a godly not an ungodly outcome. Contrast the following verses. *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Deu 13:2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;*

6. Visions may have an ungodly source. *Eze 12:24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.* It is possible to reason when having a vision, to question the source and purpose of it. *Act 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.*

WARNING! Avoid people who just "see" things with no understanding and verification in reality. Also question and examine the physical and emotional state of the individual at the time of a "seeing" occurrence.

In our early Christian lives we are like children, swayed by the flimsiest motives. Paul uses this analogy to show basic human instability. Let us by all means continue to seek revelation from God in all its forms but let us apply wisdom and discernment to what we receive. *Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

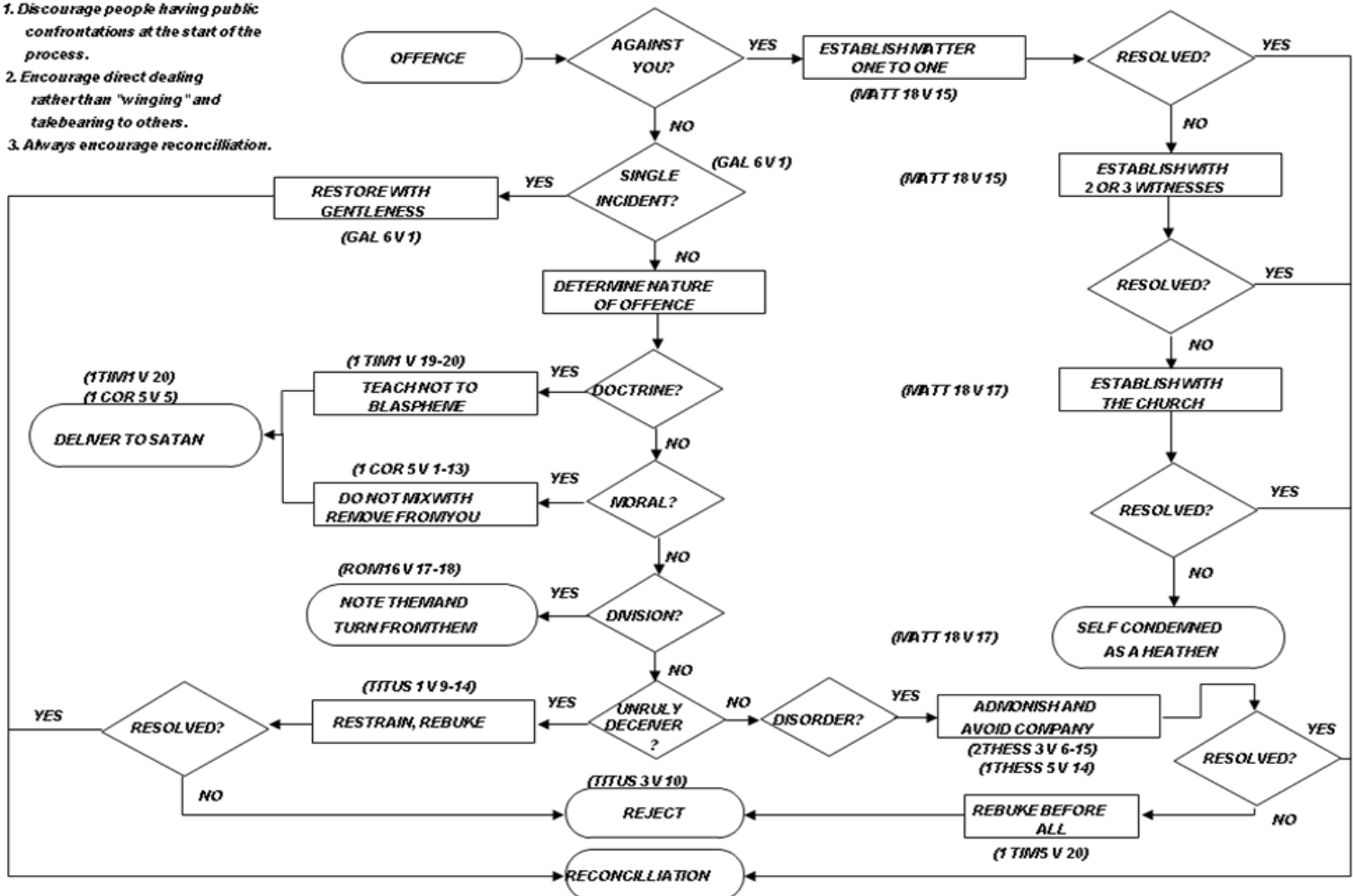
## Church Discipline

The following flow chart has been designed to assist in diagnosing the nature and correction for an offence. It should be used in conjunction with the reconciliation checklist.

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### BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE PROCEDURAL DIAGRAM

1. Discourage people having public confrontations at the start of the process.
2. Encourage direct dealing rather than "winging" and take bearing to others.
3. Always encourage reconciliation.



## Reconciliation

People can change their attitudes to others and sort out problem areas that have been divisive and caused separation. It is not a question of ability but one of motivation. God has given us all of the tools to initiate restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. We can do all things in Christ Jesus, the question is will we be motivated by Him to do so when required. *Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Biblical reconciliation does not hide or shelve differences, to the contrary it brings matters into the open and works towards a new relationship. The Greek word for reconcile means to change or alter.

If as evangelical Christians we desire to reconcile men to God, who has given us a ministry of reconciliation, we should also desire to reconcile one another when disagreements occur. *2Co 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 1Co 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 1Co 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 1Co 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 1Co 6:6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 1Co 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 1Co 6:8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.*

God is never said to be reconciled with man. Reconciliation does take place but the direction of that reconciliation is toward Him. We have offended Him, He has done no wrong to us, yet he makes a way for us to come to Him. He reconciles us while we are under condemnation, through Christ. *Rom 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Having set us this example, we are warned that if we are not prepared to reconcile the lower order relationships, man with man, then do not make the pretence of coming to serve God. *Mat 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

Some of the elements of reconciliation are:

- a) Removal of impediments. *Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*
- b) Changes must be made under genuine conviction.
- c) Acknowledgement of the godly principle and confession.
- d) Genuine forgiveness and openness.
- e) Turning and returning to true faith.
- f) Building a new relationship on accepted principles.
- g) Coming to judgement on an issue.
- h) Objectivity.

Restoring someone overtaken in a fault is a spiritual task, the characteristics of which are meekness and self examination. *Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

It requires also that you confront the problem. *Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

Paul was concerned for Timothy, that he was not making use of his gift and so, however painful it may have been to both of them, it needed to be said. *2Ti 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. 2Ti 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 2Ti 1:8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;*

Care should be exercised in matters of conscience, meats, drinks and days, where ill feeling can arise through ignorance. Patience is required to come to a full understanding of what God requires, not what impositions we would heap in ignorance upon our brethren.

Reconciliation may involve compensation. Saying sorry is not a biblical solution. Attitudes and Actions are required. Zacchaeus realised that if he was going to have Christ in his home he had to be at peace with his neighbours. *Luk 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

There is a great danger in letting matters that require reconciliation lapse. Time will begin to blur the issues, even distort the problem. You may end up arguing about another matter altogether. Your memory of events will fade (if you have not made notes) and you may even begin to re-interpret them. You must act diligently, promptly and with vigour pursue any issue to an early conclusion.



Remember also to be careful to establish the true matter that has caused offence or difference. You may be dealing with secondary issues and do resolve these but the main problem will break out again at another time, because it has not been laid to rest.

This page has been designed as a summary checklist for the process of reconciliation.

### **Reconciliation Procedures.**

#### **Diagnostic Process (Matthew 18).**

1. One to One.
2. Establish with witnesses.
3. Take it to the Church.
4. Keep it in the family of Faith (1Cor 6).

#### **Reconciliation Checklist**

1. Establish case.
2. Work towards conviction.
3. Come to a judgement
4. Encourage confession.
5. Redirect individual.
6. Exercise forgiveness.
7. Rebuild relationship.

#### **Attitude Checklist**

1. Emotional status. (Yours and third party). Aim for a spiritual attitude.
2. Be objective. (Reconciliation checklist).
3. Are you on Biblical ground or is it a personal standard at issue?
4. Are you prepared to confront and go the distance?
5. Go in to edify not to stumble. Be patient and be positive.
6. Are you prepared to be reconciled or do you expect failure?
7. How will you go forward? What new relationship will you establish?

## **Resurrection and ascension**

Modernism is attempting to undermine the Biblical teaching on the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ by introducing a new doctrine that removes the physical realities of these

events, and relegates them to some mystical experience. The Person and Work of Christ is reduced to a state of mind!

The New Testament goes to great lengths in stressing the physical proofs of these events. Nowhere are they mere mental aberrations of deluded people trying to salvage something from the life of Christ.

Moreover, and this is the cornerstone of New Testament teaching, "if Christ be not raised from the dead, you are still a sinner". In other words if there is no physical reality, there will be no spiritual realities, there will be no need to evangelise or worship and the Christian faith becomes mythology. *1Co 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 1Co 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 1Co 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 1Co 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 1Co 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 1Co 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 1Co 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 1Co 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

Paul makes the following inferences:

1. If resurrection from the dead is not possible, then Christ cannot be raised from the dead .
2. We are wasting our time preaching.
3. You are wasting your time believing.
4. We are false witnesses.
5. Sin is not dealt with.
6. The dead perish.
7. We are the most miserable of miserable people.
8. Hope is limited to this life.

In Pauls' theology the resurrection is an essential component in the forgiveness of sin. Paul summarises these fundamental elements of faith in the creed. *1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 1Co 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

A similar proof of the physical resurrection rather than a spiritual one, is given in the prophecy of David. *Act 2:25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Act 2:26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Act 2:27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Act 2:28 Thou hast made known*

*to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Act 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Act 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; Act 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

The argument is based on physical phenomenon and proceeds thus:

1. David spoke in the spirit.
2. The person David speaks of will not see corruption.
3. This could not be David because; David died, David was buried, David is still buried (we have his monument).
4. What happened to David is not what happened to Christ.
5. David is prophesying about Christ.
6. "We" are witnesses of this event.

Thomas is another witness to the event, and is given a physical challenge to prove the reality of the resurrection. *Joh 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. Joh 20:25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. Joh 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Joh 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Joh 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Jesus would convince His disciples of His real presence by sharing food with them. *Luk 24:36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. Luk 24:37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. Luk 24:38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Luk 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Luk 24:40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. Luk 24:41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? Luk 24:42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. Luk 24:43 And he took it, and did eat before them.*

What then happened to Jesus after the resurrection? Where did He go? The Bible records that Jesus took off from the ground, rising upwards into the clouds. *Luk 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. Luk 24:51 And it came to pass, while he*

*blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

There was a geographical location for this event, the Mount of Olives near Bethany. The disciples walked to the place and saw a physical ascension and it happened in broad daylight.

The significance of the ascension may be summarised as follows;

1. Christ went into the Father's presence as our advocate. *1Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:* This is a current work on behalf of His redeemed and it should give you confidence that your sin can be forgiven.

His presence and faithfulness with God accounts for our blessings. *Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Heb 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; Heb 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

2. It is through Christ's ascension that we now have a place in heaven. *Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:* Just as the benefits of His death and resurrection are accounted to us, so are the benefits of His ascension.
3. He came from heaven, His abode and He returned there. The Earth will be the place of His triumphant return. *Joh 6:62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*
4. His departure was essential for the giving of The Holy Spirit and the giving of gifts. *Joh 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* No ascension equals no gifts!

There is a sense in which the denial of the spiritual gifts by many professing Christians is also a denial of the ascension.

5. He ascended to prepare our home. *Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

The ascension of Jesus Christ is essential to the completion of His work.

## Suffering

Suffering for a believer does not occur by a vindictive act of God, neither is it meritorious (as taught by Catholicism) and we are not encouraged to seek suffering for its own sake.

It is presumptuous to think that physical disabilities are evil or a product of evil at work. *Joh 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. Joh 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

Jesus' reply to the disciples indicates that disability is not always linked to personal or other person's sin. This is but a manifestation of the creative power of God. Sensual deprivations (sight, hearing etc.) may be viewed as variants of creation rather than manifestation of evil, however there are instances where it is directly linked to evil. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

We do not view physical suffering as an ideal state of existence, otherwise there would be no reason for change and the healing power of Christ but there is always a purpose for it under God's hand.

Within the household of faith, suffering may be an imposition for chastisement. Leprosy is an example. Unworthiness at the table of Christ is another example. *1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

The purpose here is twofold:

1. The individual receives a salutary lesson, since words were insufficient to bring about change.
2. It acts as a warning to the group and an example to others. *1Co 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

Suffering may also occur through second causes, i.e. under satan. *Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. Job 2:2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to*

*destroy him without cause.* Job 2:4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. *Job 2:5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.* Faith is here under trial and a challenge to the powers who would undermine the authority of God. In all cases the first cause of suffering resides with the Lord God.

In our quest to find the answer to the why of suffering, we are often left with the answer that it is the will of God, for often no divine explanation is given. *1Pe 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.* In the ministry of Jesus, He seldom presents a formula relative to the “why” and the origin of suffering. This presents us with an important consideration in approaching the subject. Jesus encourages us with the victory of the individual in the face of suffering.

In terms of practically approaching the subject with people, we would do well to take note of God's approach. *Act 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* It is not a blustering, softening apology for inevitabilities. To the contrary it is direct, for suffering is a part of life. It must be faced head on and we should be strong enough to face up to it. God addresses it directly. *Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

When dealing with unbelievers we have little earthly comfort to offer and we cannot give them the hope of a peaceful eternity outside of Christ, for there is no everlasting joy to those who reject Jesus. The best we can do is preach the gospel and minister to physical needs!

Why does the God of Love cause suffering? The answer for the believer is "because He is a God of Love" and suffering is consistent with sanctification. If we are to give mankind a solution to the problem of suffering and there is a solution, it must be found in reconciliation with God.

Human suffering involves tragedy on many levels. *Luk 13:1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Luk 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? Luk 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luk 13:4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

These people were no worse than the rest of mankind, yet what they suffered was but a foretaste of things to come. It warns of the great danger ahead, hell and eternal pain and suffering if men do not repent and be reconciled to God. *Mar 9:43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Mar 9:44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mar 9:45 And if thy*

*foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Mar 9:46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mar 9:47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Mar 9:48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mar 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Mar 9:50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*

When you hear it said of an unbeliever who has suffered and died, "Oh it was a blessed relief", "they did not suffer long" or "they are free from all pain and sorrow now", how can this be true in the light of what Jesus says about the unrepentant? You have no comfort to offer the bereaved relatives other than to find rest in the arms of Jesus and this requires that they repented and were reconciled with God. We find the strength to bear suffering at the foot of the Cross. *Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The community of believers is a community of suffering and is not a lonely affair of the man without hope. *1Co 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* It is both our legacy and our privilege. *Php 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Within that community is found sympathy, strength and courage to endure. Gal 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

We should guard against that fallacious concept that has permeated Christianity, that Christ gives an immediate solution to all of our problems. But He does indeed solve one problem immediately by granting us access to the infinite resource of God Himself. Once the door is opened we can start the race. In Christ problems are thrown into sharp relief and we can then see unfolded the solutions to the backlog of accumulated horrors that sin has written large over our earthly careers.

The development of sonship is not without its suffering. It is experiential for us as it was for Jesus. *Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

## Suffering and Sin

There are four major causes of suffering:

1. Calamity.
2. Chastisement.
3. Punishment.
4. 4. Gods creative purpose.

Suffering in one of its forms, is the condition given to all men from the fall to glory. The new creation will have no suffering. *Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. Rev 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

When man sinned in the beginning God increased his suffering. *Gen 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Gen 3:18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; Gen 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Creation was set to rebuke mankind by making all of his attempts to procreate and survive a struggle. "Nature red in tooth and claw" is a symptom of the lack of harmony in a sinful world. The creation expects better and the prophets foresaw the new creation at peace. *Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. Rom 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Rom 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now..... Isa 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. Isa 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Isa 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

"Natural" disasters might be considered as part of creations groaning in a sinful world. *Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must*



*come to pass, but the end is not yet. Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. Mat 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

Another effect of suffering is death. In Romans we see sin causing the entrance of death. *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Rom 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

Sin reigns in death. *Rom 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In the first instance we see that this death is spiritual and this was the state of us before Christ gave us new life, through the new birth. *Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* In Eden physical death became a certainty because God barred man from the remedy, namely the tree of life. *Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

Sin produces suffering and we are often faced with the apparent inequality of what ought to be an equation. Suffering we think should be in proportion to righteousness. Why then do the wicked appear to prosper and hardships come upon the righteous? Asaph pondered this and found a solution (Psalm 73). Of course there is no equation as far as the bible is concerned. We cannot correlate suffering with wickedness or righteousness in this life. Known unto God are His works (ways) and He does not always give account to us. *Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world..... Job 33:13 Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

## Effective Preaching

There are many elements of presentation that we may develop in order to preach the gospel. However it is not essential to adopt a theatrical or cultural rhetoric to be effective. Paul, although a

learned man, did not mimic the Greek presentation. *2Co 10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

In order to bring a text of scripture to life you must have come to an understanding of it and assimilated it into your life. If you have made little personal effort to read and digest the word of God you are unlikely to bring it to life for others, besides it will reflect a lack of sincerity on your part. You want others to become familiar with things you are prepared to remain in ignorance of.

You may overcome some personal disability by becoming involved in a partnership. *Exo 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Exo 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. Exo 4:13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. Exo 4:14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. Exo 4:15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. Exo 4:16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. Exo 4:17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.*

You become a team. In the New Testament there are teams of evangelists. *Act 15:26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Act 15:27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*

What ways are there of improving our presentation? Firstly I would suggest you need to Study. *1Ti 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1Ti 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 1Ti 4:15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 1Ti 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. 2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Unfortunately for many Christians, the scripture is not an elegant, sharp, powerful tool in the hands of a craftsman. It is often a plank with which they cudgel a man's brains out. Far from achieving a

surgical removal of sin, they wreck any further hope of surgery by killing the patient. We must work and study to become proficient in the word of God so that we become surgeons.

Be conscious of your speech and note the effect that you are having. Have you gained eye contact? Are you making a valid point and is it being received?

Improve your speech. Many people are lazy in their speech. They do not enunciate correctly, they speak too quietly and they display a poor vocabulary. If people cannot hear you clearly, then you have fallen at the first hurdle.

Develop a useful vocabulary. Words are analogous to the artist's palette. The more colours you have, then the more realistic your picture.

## Preaching and Witnessing

Preaching is the proclamation of the word of God to men under an assignment from God. As such it is the ordained means of transmission of God's word. *Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? Rom 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Rom 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

In the specific area of preaching to believers it is for edification. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The so called "electric church" has a limited value in the same way that a book, magazine or a tape has. It cannot substitute for fellowship which is interactive and complementary. *1Co 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? 1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 1Co 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 1Co 14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. 1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 1Co 14:30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. 1Co 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be*

*comforted. 1Co 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 1Co 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints..... Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Rom 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Rom 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

There is a sense in which some aspects of media can be divisive as a means of communicating the faith. They are supplementary and must be seen as such.

Biblical Christianity works from a church base. *Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Act 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. Act 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: Act 15:23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Act 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: Act 15:25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*

It will endeavour to integrate people into that structure from which they too will function. *Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:* Function is the operative word! Because it is practical, personal and living, it will introduce the individual to the practical side of church life (Baptism, Lord's Table, counselling, exhortation, fellowship etc.).

When, as an individual, you feel inadequate to deal with a situation, use the strong resources of your church. Involve others. Would you enter a sporting activity, partnering up with someone who gave you the smallest chance of success? Why then not do so in matters of faith? Develop your skills, but also use those who are more skilled when putting over matters of faith.

Some people prefer to remain "children" in the faith because it absolves them from any input into the "body". The argument goes that if you are not doing anything, then you cannot be doing anything wrong. If however bits of the body do not function, they are discarded in the natural.

Jeremiah could not insist that he was a child in the face of duty neither can we. *Jer 1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jer 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jer 1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. Jer 1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Jer 1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

Develop an earnestness to communicate. *Php 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Php 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Php 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Heb 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip..... Heb 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;..... Jer 11:6 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. Jer 11:7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Jer 11:8 Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not..... Act 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*

That earnestness must also temper our behaviour and will be reflected in our conduct. Bad behaviour will compromise our testimony and destroy our credibility.

Develop a real concern for the people that you are talking to. They are dying men in a dying world. Christ through you is the means of deliverance. It must be carried out with compassion not just as a matter of duty. Jonah was more compassionate over a plant than the great city. People are very quick to discern genuine sincerity. The "good Samaritan" was a caring person and he showed it, because care should show. *Luk 10:34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Luk 10:35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee..... 2Co 7:12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. ....2Co 8:16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart*

*of Titus for you.*

Lack of care is divisive. *1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

## The Content of Paul's Ministry

Paul was a "super" Jew, so does he appeal to the Old Testament as the basis for New Testament action? *Gal 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: Gal 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

If so, then to what extent and why? Today there is a growing movement, going under the name "Christian Reconstruction", although it would be more apt to call it Judaistic reconstruction. At the core of its thinking is the aim of instituting the laws of Israel in society. This is in order to fulfil the dominion mandate of Genesis. *Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.* We must examine the scripture to see if this is the correct approach for Christians and we shall in particular be searching for a New Testament precedent.

Critics of this movement point out that the New Covenant is not founded on the Law of Moses, however little is said about how they arrive at moral values and codes of conduct. *Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; Heb 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Heb 10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

The Puritans were presented with the practical issues of conducting life in a new society and introducing law and order and it was no easy task.

Paul was a "Hebrew of Hebrews", did he see the laws of Moses as something to be imposed upon mankind? As we shall see, he did not. In this he was not a "Reconstructionist". In fact he was accused of undermining the Law of Moses. *Act 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.* In order to retain some links with the law, Christians say that he was only dealing with the ceremonial aspects of law (i.e. circumcision etc.) We must make some points of principle.

1. The scripture speaks of LAW, but it does not make the distinction between Ceremonial, Civil or Moral law. LAW is a coherent body of teaching and rules.
2. Circumcision was the entrance to national privilege and national privilege was maintained on the condition of legal obedience. *Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Deu 28:3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deu 28:4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Deu 28:5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Deu 28:6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.*

Hence Paul says that anyone who is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law. *Gal 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Gal 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

If therefore, under Paul's terms of reference, you reject circumcision, then you are rejecting the body of Mosaic Law!

There is no evidence in the New Testament for Christians being encouraged to obtain positions of civil power from which they re-enact the laws of Moses to subdue society. The goal of the New Testament is not to re-establish an Israelite state, neither is it to rebuild the Temple or separate themselves from society.

Christians do though have civil responsibilities (Romans chapter 13), and we are viewed as a preservative in society. *Mat 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Mat 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

What are "upright works", and what standards do we adopt to distinguish our works from "works of darkness"? If we can make a distinction, it is because there are rules, principles and laws. What are they? How are they derived? How do we know that they are just?

But should we, in the absence of clear New Testament directives fall back upon the Old Testament Law of Moses? Is there a principle that would justify that? We shall in due course answer these questions.

There is a clear shift in New Testament thinking, away from the Law of Moses. *Act 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Act 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, Act 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Act 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

Here was an ideal opportunity to bring back "Moses" and apply the Jewish culture to the Gentiles but to the contrary, Moses is put away with a few concessions. No Sabbath law or Tithe is applied to the Gentiles. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

The enactment of law does not make men good, neither is it the means of sanctification or of obtaining glory. While civil powers hold the "sword" the saints are never encouraged to apply these methods among themselves. While not under Law, we are not lawless. Why? Because our principles have deeper roots. The law had as it were, a clear cut black and white approach to problem solving.

We in the New Testament have a grey scale. Our system of values as we shall see are quite clear, but they take into account such factors as frailty and lack of knowledge in others. Our behaviour, our freedom, is restrained by consideration of the conscience of another person (Romans chapter 14). We do not bulldoze our way over weaker brethren. While we accept all things from the hand of God, His meats and drinks, we do not flaunt this freedom in the face of the weaker brother.

The Law of Moses did not distinguish between believer and unbeliever. It addresses the whole Nation. *Exo 20:22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. While the restraints are external, it has no ability to make a man righteous, neither can it make him honest. Gal 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

True it has a restraining effect but it is in reality holding the lid down upon a mass of human corruption. In Christ there is freedom not maintained by law but by "faith working through love". *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ....Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage..... Gal 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*



It is a new power, the power of the Holy Spirit working righteousness through the Spirit, by a spiritual rather than a fleshly walk. *Gal 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law..... Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

We have to discern what in our lives is "fleshly" (carnal) and what is "spiritual" (i.e. of the spirit).

The New Testament states as a principle, "evil associations corrupt good manners". *1Co 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.* Places and people will influence our behaviour and with this warning we must not tempt providence or abuse our liberty. We cannot like the Puritans legislate sobriety any more than we can legislate righteousness. Civil law against drink driving has arrived at an "average" figure but takes no account of the individual's age, capacity or metabolism, neither has it stopped the offence!

What constraints does the New Testament suggest to us?

1. The Love of God and the knowledge of His displeasure. *Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*
2. Exhortation and admonition. *2Th 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 2Th 3:15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*
3. Love to your neighbour. *1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1Co 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 1Co 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*
4. Moderation in all things. *1Co 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 1Co 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 1Co 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*
5. Profitability and edification. *1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1Co 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*

6. Excommunication. *1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 1Co 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 1Co 5:13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*
7. Divine retribution. *1Co 10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Act 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.*

There are no "vectors" applied to restraint, i.e. time allowed, place, quantity, age, day of week, because the New Testament endeavours to build a healthy conscience rather than a thriving prison!

Apart from Divine intervention there is a non-physical approach to problem solving. We do not beat believers, put them in stocks, kill them or mutilate them. The Saints are not encouraged to behave in the same manner as the powers that wield the sword.

## Puritans and Law

The New England Puritan community thought fit to reintroduce the legislation of Moses. We shall examine features of the 1672 and 1685 editions of the laws that they adopted.

Sabbath breaking was made a capital offence in 1672. They also equated Sabbath with the Lord's Day but there is no Biblical ground for this. On that day "smoking" and drinking were banned. Clearly Sabbath behaviour was different to other days and they had a dual standard. By 1685 the death penalty for Sabbath breaking was rescinded, although the reason for this is not stated.

Branding was a means of punishment. "B" for a burglar, "R" for robber. If you committed the offence on the Sabbath you were branded in the head! They were influenced by the Old Testament Law but without Biblical justification, they added their own modifications (brandings, no drinking, whippings etc.). They were little different to many modern day Christians who accept the "letter" of the law and modify it at will. If however, you accept the law, you must abide in it without addition or subtraction. *Deu 4:40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.*

Jesus says that the law is easily made void by the traditions of men. *Mat 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; Mat 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment*

*of God of none effect by your tradition. Mat 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, Mat 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. Mat 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* These same “Christians” find no problem in accommodating tradition!

If you put yourself under law, you must hold to it totally, because if you fail in one point alone you have failed totally. *Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

It is difficult to define behaviour that constitutes a breach of law but the Puritans made an attempt. For example with regard to intemperance, they tried to define the symptoms of drunkenness and made punishments to deter it. They reasoned that there was a lingering above necessity which led to excess, therefore they imposed a time limit of one hour for drinking (we should describe lingering over food as gluttony). Inveterate drinkers were marked out and discouraged and Indians who had a great appetite for drink and subsequently were disorderly, were not to be given drink. By 1685 the drinking laws had been grouped into a complete section called "Inn keepers".

Marriages were to be recorded, publicly announced, required parental consent and had to be civilly registered. Puritans did not bring the matter of marriage into the church setting by solemnising under ministers but rather under the magistrate. Some Christians accept this process for the sake of public order, to avoid offence and to encourage marriage against fornication. Others might consider that these are mere perversions of scripture and consequently dissent in order to reprove the error.

The State we live in has no requirement of marriage and the action you take will depend upon your conscience. In this matter you must examine your conscience before God. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Act 24:17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Act 24:18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Act 24:19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Act 24:20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Act 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.*

## Authority

The early chapters of the Epistle of Acts up to chapter 11 deal with the great Christian doctrines of faith, justification, sin and law. The practical issues of Christianity which spring from these teachings

are dealt with from chapter 12 onwards. In particular we look at relationships with the saints and their authorities and rulers.

Chapter 12. General behaviour (Individual ethics).

Chapter 13. Relationships with rulers (Social ethics).

Chapter 14. Relationships with believers.

In chapter 12 Paul encourages a transformation (transfiguration) in us and that by the power of the Spirit. *2Co 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* It is not achieved by adopting worldly values and their cultural standards.

Paul has earlier spoken about the "in-working" of faith and now moves to "out-working". He recognises the diversity of gifts amongst us and it is this that creates our need for fellowship and interdependence. *Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;..... 1Co 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 1Co 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 1Co 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 1Co 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 1Co 12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 1Co 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

The analogy of sheep ends with the concept of oversight (pastors) and watchfulness, having established our corporate structure. *1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 1Pe 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 1Pe 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 1Pe 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* It says nothing about our individual abilities.

The royal priesthood displays our personal abilities. *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 1Pe 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 1Pe 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in*

*the day of visitation. 1Pe 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 1Pe 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 1Pe 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 1Pe 2:16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. 1Pe 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. 1Pe 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 1Pe 2:19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 1Pe 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

Too much attention is given to being sheep and the consequential idleness associated with wandering about aimlessly in fields, rather than being part of a vital army of soldiers and workers.

It is more than just doing a "job" though. People are more and more content to see things done but not in God's terms or with the qualities and gifts associated with a Christian vocation. Let us examine some attitudes:

	<b>Christian Attitude</b>	<b>Worldly attitude</b>
Tribulation	Hang in	Give up
Prayer	Do not give up	It doesn't work
Charity	Meet the needs of the Saints	Covetousness
Hospitality	Open all hours	Conditional
Persecution	Kindliness	Revenge
Rejoicing	Empathy	Jealousy
Sorrow	Empathy	Indifference
Respect	At all levels	For personal gain
Evil	Stops at your door	Reflect it
Honesty	Universal	Selective
Peace	In Christ	None

Paul summarises, by an example of how you treat an enemy when he is in your power. You do not rub his face in the mud! Our lives are constantly in danger of being overwhelmed with evil but it is our duty to fight it with good. We are in this respect like a fire brigade, rushing to smother outbreaks of evil, soaking it with good.

To summarise:

Commitment must be total and the world's demands secondary. We must examine carefully the priorities in our lives.

We do not invoke Law on behalf of ourselves to justify our position. Self must take a back seat. Aggression, violence, revenge and prejudice are not the means we use to further the kingdom of God.

Moving on from individual ethics, Paul looks at the global effects of our Christianity and how third parties are affected.

Romans chapter 13. There are difficulties associated with this chapter. Is the subjection conditional? Is it right to exercise civil disobedience if rulers do not conform to Mosaic laws? Paul is concerned that we fulfil the law not that we obey selective dictates of the law and as we observe the fullness of the Law is love. *Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Rom 13:9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Rom 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

That can only be the result of a spiritual transformation. *1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 1Jn 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* It is not the work of the law, it is the work of the Spirit.

Paul does not tell us the condition of the authorities or rulers. He makes no distinction between Christian and non-Christian rulers. Whatever the state of mankind it is derived from God, it is not derived from satan, who is himself under the authority of God, as are the demons. *1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

This does not mean that satan is not involved in the lives of our unbelieving rulers. *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* What we see is that the rulers are there in their spiritual condition (believing or unbelieving) as a direct result of the purpose of God, not satan.

The fact that God is Sovereign in His appointments, does not make the appointments infallible in their decision making. For example Pharaoh who is fighting against God and hardened against Him to disobey was raised up for this purpose. *Exo 1:9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:..... Exo 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*

What then are the grounds for subjection to authority?

**On account of wrath.** *Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* Civil government is a form of Divine restraint against evil for the benefit of God's people.

Satan would destroy the church yet his minions serve the purpose of God to preserve them. *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

**On account of conscience.** In Corinthians conscience is shown to be that of another weaker brother. *1Co 10:27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 1Co 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: 1Co 10:29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

In fact it would be senseless of Paul to say that we should have a good conscience before God and men and then having spent all that time and effort developing it, cast it away at a dinner table. The man eating can do so because of his conscience, not in spite of it. Paul abstains on account of the weak man, so as not to cause him offence.

## Conscience

Many people believe that the conscience is an infallible faculty possessed by mankind, a vestige of the law of God that has been given to all men and that in cases of moral crisis, the conscience gives out an alarm signal to both warn and correct bad behaviour. A guilt feeling is generated by the conscience that corrects error.

In opposition to this view we hold that man has no innate or natural faculty for knowing right or wrong. *Rom 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:* Also if man had a resident faculty of law why did God need to send it from Sinai and why in the New Testament did God need to write it upon the heart? *Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*

Further the conscience is not infallible! It is possible to have:

1. A weak conscience. *1Co 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*
2. An evil conscience. *Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*
3. A burned out conscience. *1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

The Bible clearly teaches that the conscience cannot be relied upon as infallible. People who claim to be acting upon conscience cannot be relied upon as infallible, they may be acting upon what they claim is conscience but it may be something that is impulsive and wrong.

How then can we describe the function of conscience? It is associated with knowledge, it assimilates knowledge and it produces a rationale based upon what is learned or input to it. The Greek word for conscience, "suneidesis" and means perception or awareness. My behaviour will be prompted by what I have learned. If I learn law I will be prompted by law, I will have a legal conscience. If I study little I will have a weak conscience. If I learn sin, I will have an evil conscience.

The good conscience is one fed and watered by the word of God. It will grow in both knowledge and sensitivity. Its perception will be heightened as we exercise it. We shall also question when matters of conflict arise whether we are confronting a weak, or evil conscience.

When Paul says "on account of conscience" he speaks with respect of the conscience of the weaker brother. *1Co 10:27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 1Co 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: 1Co 10:29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?* Having developed his conscience he doesn't cast it away at the dinner table. The man who can eat does so because of his conscience not in spite of it, he abstains because of the weak brother.

It is a principle to develop a conscience "void of offence" (GK: aproskopon meaning both



unoffending and unoffended). *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

In the context of the passage Paul argues that he has behaved with great care not to offend. *Act 24:11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. Act 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Act 24:13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. Act 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: Act 24:15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Act 24:17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Act 24:18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Act 24:19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Act 24:20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Act 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.*

Paul avoided offence by the athleticism of his spiritual life. He constantly reviewed his circumstances and checked the responses so that he could stand before men and God without offence. That does not mean that offences will not occur but they will be offences of a sinful nature coming from those in fear of their own destruction. *Php 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; Php 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. Php 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Php 1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me*

Growth in love and knowledge, leads to a pure and unoffending life having respect for those outside of the faith. *Php 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 1Co 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 1Co 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

Why though should we respect an unbeliever's conscience? The Hebrew does not use the word conscience, rather it uses the word "heart". The heart exhibits the functions of conscience. *2Sa 24:10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. Job 27:6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will*

*not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. 1Jn 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

Does this mean that the heart and the conscience are the same? We suggest that the conscience functions within the heart.

Reason, wisdom, and thought are often associated with the head but Biblically they are associated with the heart. The heart is a powerhouse, a pump, an engine from which by analogy, springs the motive power of the individual. Also within the heart are different faculties including conscience (which exhibits the qualities of self-awareness and rationality based upon the knowledge that it acquires). But conscience is more than a rational faculty.

A gyroscope possesses rotational inertia, a property that resists directional changes impressed upon it. It is this property that enables you to ride a bicycle because it assists your stability. The faster the wheels spin the more inertia they possess and the greater the stability you have. Gyroscopes are employed in navigational instruments (gyrocompass) because of this directional stability that they possess. The gyro will maintain its position as the ship changes heading, thus after a manner of speaking, "remembering" where the vessel was. The conscience is like the gyrocompass. It maintains the directional stability of the soul. The faster it spins the more stable the individual is. We gain that increased spin from the knowledge that we put into it.

With the "weak" conscience possessed of little knowledge, it has little "inertia" and the slightest knock overbalances it and the individual stumbles. With a "strong" conscience possessed of greater knowledge there is a higher "inertia" so that when a conflict occurs, the conscience forces the individual back to his correct duty (it bears witness).

For this reason the Psalmist hides the word of God in his heart so that he might not sin against God and it stops him from wandering. *Psa 119:10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Psa 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and needs renewing. *Jer 17:1 The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; Jer 17:2 Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. Jer 17:3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. Jer 17:4 And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever. Jer 17:5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. Jer 17:6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the*

*parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Jer 17:7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. Jer 17:8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Jer 17:9 **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?** Jer 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

In answer to the question that was posed earlier, "why respect the weak conscience or that of the unbeliever", we answer that it is contrary to biblical principles to destabilise the individual (a form of rebellion). They are unstable and rather than stumble them, we must strengthen and educate them.

This leads us to ask "what are the limits of conscience?" There are times when Paul appears to hold double standards. In Galatians (chapter 2) Paul admits to having resisted compulsory circumcision and rebukes those who submit to Judaism yet he circumcises Timothy on account of the Jews and submits to ritual separation. Does he rebuke what he practices? *Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Act 16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Act 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. Act 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*

We have mentioned the "grey scale" of conscience and suggest the following reasons for Paul's behaviour.

1. Timothy was circumcised to establish his Jewish roots and to illustrate the position stated in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. *1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;* In an evangelistic situation Paul's concern was to overcome prejudice.
2. In the case of "false brethren" who want to undermine Christian liberty by using the ordinance of circumcision deceitfully, it was essential to make a stand. *Gal 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: Gal 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Gal 2:6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: Gal 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; Gal 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the*

*circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)* Gal 2:9 *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Gal 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.* Paul was present at this event. Act 15:4 *And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. Act 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Act 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. Act 15:7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.*

3. When Paul associated himself with the vow cleansing was a concession to the zealous brethren. Act 21:20 *And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: Act 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Act 21:22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Act 21:23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Act 21:24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. Act 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Act 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.* Paul did not want to undermine Moses, he wanted to preach Christ. 1Co 9:23 *And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

The council of Jerusalem specifically dealt with impositions upon the gentiles not the Jews. Act 15:19 *Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

The Jews were quite within their rights to celebrate new moons or Sabbath. Col 2:16 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

4. Paul's rebuke to Peter was to confirm the principle agreed among themselves as teachers, which Peter had undermined. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.* Peter was snared by fear not motivated by conscience. *Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

There are certain expedients for the propagation of the gospel (i.e. circumcision) but where there are evil motives among those who insist upon an observance, it is correct to withstand. *Gal 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. Gal 6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

There are matters which we call "indifferent" (i.e. food, drink, observance of days or seasons). *Rom 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Rom 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

For that reason we cannot legislate against Christmas as Cromwell did, even though it is not a New Testament festival. We must however make sure that we are acting in faith. *Rom 14:22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. Rom 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

Faith comes from God's word, therefore as a principle, whether we decide to eat or abstain, we should be motivated by God's word, otherwise it is sin! *Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

We do not group other issues as "indifferent" because there are matters that we must observe and do. If a man doesn't want to work it is not a matter of indifference. If he will not work he cannot claim that it is a matter of conscience because there is a rebuke, "do not let him eat". *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 2Th 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 2Th 3:13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 2Th 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

Matters of order and obedience are outside of the realm of choice. Christian sanctions are essential. Admonishing disorderly people is a Christian duty and Paul does not spare sin. *1Th 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men..... 2Co 13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:*

Fornication is not a matter of conscience or human choice, however, grace is shown if the warnings are heeded. *2Co 2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*

We do not believe that hair coverings or hair length are matters of conscience and we must take care to discern weakness from disobedience. Hair coverings are a matter of honour yet we must also see that we have no power to legislate the design of the covering or the length of hair. *1Co 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?* Those features will be motivated out of a love for God and they will be a reflection of it.

## The Law and the Gospel

Paul charges Timothy to encourage stability by sound teaching. *1Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; 1Ti 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

### Warning Against False Teachers

*1Ti 1:3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 1Ti 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. 1Ti 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 1Ti 1:6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; 1Ti 1:7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 1Ti 1:8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 1Ti 1:9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 1Ti 1:10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; 1Ti*

*1:11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

### **Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners**

*1Ti 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;* This passage is often used to support the idea that the Law of Moses is still valid and acceptable as the rule of life for New Testament Christians. This is encouraged by the Authorised Version's rendering of verse 5, as if to imply that the commands or law issues in charity out of a pure heart. Somehow, law fosters grace in the minds of some Christians!

We denounce that idea. The word "command (Gk parangellia v 5) is also used in verse 3 and verse 18, where it is translated "charge". In the Greek it is the intensive form of announce (we derive Angel = messenger and ev-angel = gospel). So then, the word does not mean command or law. It is the evangelical charge to our New Testament duty. *1Ti 4:11 These things command and teach..... 1Ti 5:7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless..... 1Ti 6:13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;..... 1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*

When Paul uses the word in the first chapter of his letter to Timothy, the "charge" is contrast with the things that have been missed. Paul encouraged Timothy to discourage quibbling and questioning since such things do not further the administration of God in faith.

The end (telos) or goal of the charge is "love out of a pure heart". He is showing that the "charge" is to put down falsehood and questioning, consequently that which issues from the charge (its goal) is love out of a pure heart. These opening verses of the letter are aimed at putting people "back on the tracks" with a genuine (anupokritou = unhyppocritical) faith.

He then digresses into comments about the law, showing what happens to those who miss the mark. He does not say that the law is bad, even if it is abused, misunderstood or misapplied. To the contrary, the law of God is always spoken of as good, light, holy and just. It is never called evil or sinful.

The law contemplates the "bad" and stands over evil, casting its gaze and comments upon sinners.

Law may bring conviction of impurity but can never deliver from it, faith purifies. *Act 15:9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith..... 1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

The law then in delivering its recriminations, stands in a different relationship to the Gospel. The law has its application to the Unrighteous and those things that oppose the Gospel.

The law is made for bad men, the Gospel is the rule for those made righteous. So while the law might detect, convict and punish it could not make just or good, it wounded or killed. *Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Neither could the law form motives for righteousness.

Does this passage (1 Timothy) establish that Mosaic Law is a principle governing Christians or that the law is our righteous rule of life? No! Law is for criminals and that we are not. Let us restate what the law does.

1. Produces the knowledge of sin. *Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*
2. Works wrath. *Rom 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*
3. It is the power of sin. *Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.*
4. It ministers death and condemnation. *2Co 3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.*
5. It holds men under a curse. *Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*
6. It was added because of transgressions. *Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

If as Christians we are placed under law we are placed under a curse. If as Christians we go back under law we go under a curse and despise the work of Jesus. He was made a curse to deliver us from the curse. *Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: Gal 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

We are therefore in Christ delivered from the curse (that is the law).



## Leading Meetings

Guidelines for leading a meeting.

- Welcome visitors. Have they been given a visitors sheet explaining the meeting format? Ask if they are prepared to give a testimony?
- Focus the people on worship. Seek the Lords blessing.
- Announce who you are at the start.
- Explain what you intend to do as regards the order for the day.
- Enquire if any person has a problem or need.
- Are there any prayer requests?
- Check who has a ministry?
- Make time for sharing.
- Explain what the voluntary collection, if you have one, is for.

General guidelines for meeting

- There is a prayer meeting at the start, try and get there.
- Have a tape cued if you intend to use one.
- If you are using hymns other than those agreed in the Mission Praise, encourage people to listen to them beforehand.
- If you have something to share or a hymn, direct your request to whoever is leading.
- Welcome visitors. Try smiling at them but respect their personal space.
- Speak to visitors afterwards.
- Try not to "babble" between hymns, and endeavour to be quieter at the start.
- Keep an eye on your own children. Don't expect someone else to do your job and don't let them run wild after the meeting. We have a testimony to those outside!
- Prepare yourself to come to meetings.
- Sisters have some spare head coverings by them.

## New Age and Occult

Tarot Cards.

These cards with different picture symbols on their faces are used to 'predict' an individual's fortune from the sequence of dealing. It is seeking guidance and knowledge by a source other than God and His appointed means. There is also a temptation to believe and act upon the predictions and it could

lead to a deeper involvement in occult phenomenon. We believe that this practice is unnecessary, evil and should be avoided by Christians.

#### Extrasensory Perception (ESP).

This phenomenon involves a form of communication between individuals by a method as yet scientifically undefined. The phenomenon is often investigated using tarot cards (a set contains 5 sets of 5 symbols ~, =, \*, O, D). As a research tool, we do not find these cards to have any moral significance, since we use many instruments to determine natural (if it is) science. However, it is moving in a realm of the unknown that may again lead into experimentation with other more dangerous occult phenomenon. We can find no reasons for the Christian to practice this.

#### Horoscopes.

These popular predictions relating to an individual's fortune appear in Daily Newspapers, Magazines, Comics and on Television. They are constructed by a variety of means often from the position of stars and planets that are supposed to have an influence on fortune.

There is no proven scientific method to support this form of divination and Scripture condemns it. It is similar to tarot and as such is a dangerous preoccupation. Behind the practice is the idea that a person's destiny is governed by the stars and as such cannot be changed. This is a denial of the power of God to change the future for a man.

Biblically the Sun and Moon are placed in the firmament as a celestial chronometer, not as predictors of fate. *Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:* Wise men followed His star under Divine direction but this sets no precedent for following stars. *Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

We believe that the practice of studying horoscopes is sinful and not a harmless practice. Avoid the temptation to read them.

#### Old Moores Almanac.

This almanac contains scientific data but in addition predictions. We counsel against the study of predictions which take away an individual's need to develop the Godly gift of prophecy in the church.

## Water Divination.

This phenomenon whereby individuals claim to be able to discern the location of water (or other objects) using rods or pendulums has no proven scientific basis, as for example a metal detector. Tests have indicated that the location of objects is no greater than would be obtained by chance. While the ends may seem to be profitable on many occasions, for Christians the means does not justify the end. We urge caution in considering using this practice as it may lie in the realms of evil divination.

## Crystal Balls.

A Ball of glass is not an object possessed with any special power. As furniture it is nothing moral. If individuals use it for predictive purposes then the evil lies in them not the Ball. Used for divination we believe it to be an evil practice. The Ephesians would have destroyed these objects. *Act 19:19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.*

## Ouija Boards.

These boards, with letters of the alphabet arranged on them are used to communicate with the 'spirit world', who spell out messages from the letters around the board. It appears like a toy and hence many children have been snared into using it, which has produced some dangerous side effects resembling demon possession. Unlike horoscopes, it is an interactive tool employed by spiritists and mediums. It raises the questions of communication with the dead and the state of the dead. We are warned in no uncertain terms to avoid this practice. *Deu 18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Deu 18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*

It leads us away from seeking true gifts of the Spirit to seeking spirit phenomenon. It appears to involve demonic powers and a non-Biblical approach to the afterlife. We advise Christians in no uncertain terms to avoid all contact with Ouija Boards, even if it is suggested as a 'harmless' game. It is not, it is disobedience to God's word.

## Superstitions and Charms.

Faith must be directed towards God and those things He has ordered as right and proper. Many people are deceived by sinful traditions and practices which draw them away from godly beliefs. This unreasoned trust is to be condemned since that which is not of Faith is sin. *Rom 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

Many people are willingly gullible particularly when they hope to make personal gain from a foolish practice. Greed and selfishness are often at the root of superstitions and ruthless people often preyed upon simple minds to make money or bring them into subjection to falsehood. Avoid fear and fancy.

Rituals.

These may be in two classes. Firstly are they actions which people invest with power? If one cites the Lords Table as a ritual then it is founded upon godly principles and is acceptable. If it falls into the area of superstition then it is unacceptable.

Secondly there are actions or patterns of behaviour that people adopt in order to improve performance and develop a regularity of practice. Such habits can be beneficial and lead to an ordered lifestyle. However, we must examine the profitability of our actions and habits by the standard of God's word. We cannot condemn all rituals out of hand.

Ghosts.

By the word ghost we mean spirit. We believe in The Holy Spirit who is to be obeyed. We question the source of other manifestations called spirits which may be of satanic origin. Poltergeist, the so called mischievous spirit we regard as a demonic manifestation.

Reincarnation.

This is the popular idea that a person may return after death into a new life on earth in another body. This is not to be confused with resurrection, the raising of a man from the dead into his physical body or into his glorified new body. The Bible does not teach reincarnation neither does a mechanism exist for its performance. *Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth..... Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

Witchcraft, Satanism, Spiritism and Mediums.

These are all sinful activities, and are condemned. *Lev 19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God..... Lev 20:6 And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people..... Exo 22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*

All unbelievers are by nature Satanists, although they would often deny this fact. *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked*

*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Satan appears as an angel of light and we believe that those involved in these activities are either being duped by evil or are consciously and actively involved with demonic forces. *2Co 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* Disobedience to The Lord is also described as the sin of witchcraft (1 Samuel 15), thus we must take heed lest we fall under the power of evil.

Curses.

If we define a curse as the calling down of a perverse providence upon an evil doer then it is a Biblical function. *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse..... Lev 20:9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him..... 1Co 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost..... 1Co 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha..... Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

God curses men and curses them for avoiding obedience to His word (Revelations 22). *Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;* We do not see that a curse from an unbeliever has any power over a believer. We believe in God's power not man's.

Science and the Occult.

The natural sciences are very selective in their approach to the paranormal.

There are many well documented cases of the paranormal that have no known scientific basis but then neither do the miracles of the Bible. Secular science rejects all such manifestations as beyond belief because its system of reasoning cannot adapt or cope with the phenomenon. How can we assess miracles, healing, signs and wonders from whatever source they are generated? What yardstick can we apply to such phenomenon? We believe that the Bible does offer sound guidance for our assessment.

Miracles and healings do not always come from Godly sources. *Rev 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

Devils can work miracles and they have a unifying purpose gathering the powers of the earth together. We should not be surprised to see people being drawn together by evil miracles since they form an alternative church. Such demonic manifestations are called "lying wonders" not because they are unreal but because they deceive people into false beliefs and practices. *Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* They are ungodly and deceptive.

We are therefore not just to concentrate on the wonder, the sign or the healing. We are to look at the source and the direction that the sign is leading us in. In other words do not be gullible and take things at face value.

Biblical healers look to Christ as the source of power and glorify Him. *Act 3:16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all..... Luk 9:49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us..... Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

Does the sign magnify God through Christ or is it silent? However many come in Christ's name but they can lead astray and we require an additional test. *Luk 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.*

Do the workers of the miracles also follow God's will? *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Be suspicious of a man who does not behave as a disciple of Christ because Christ will certainly disown him.

We also note that those who are claiming godly acts will not speak lightly of Christ and they will acknowledge the source is Christ. *Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part. Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

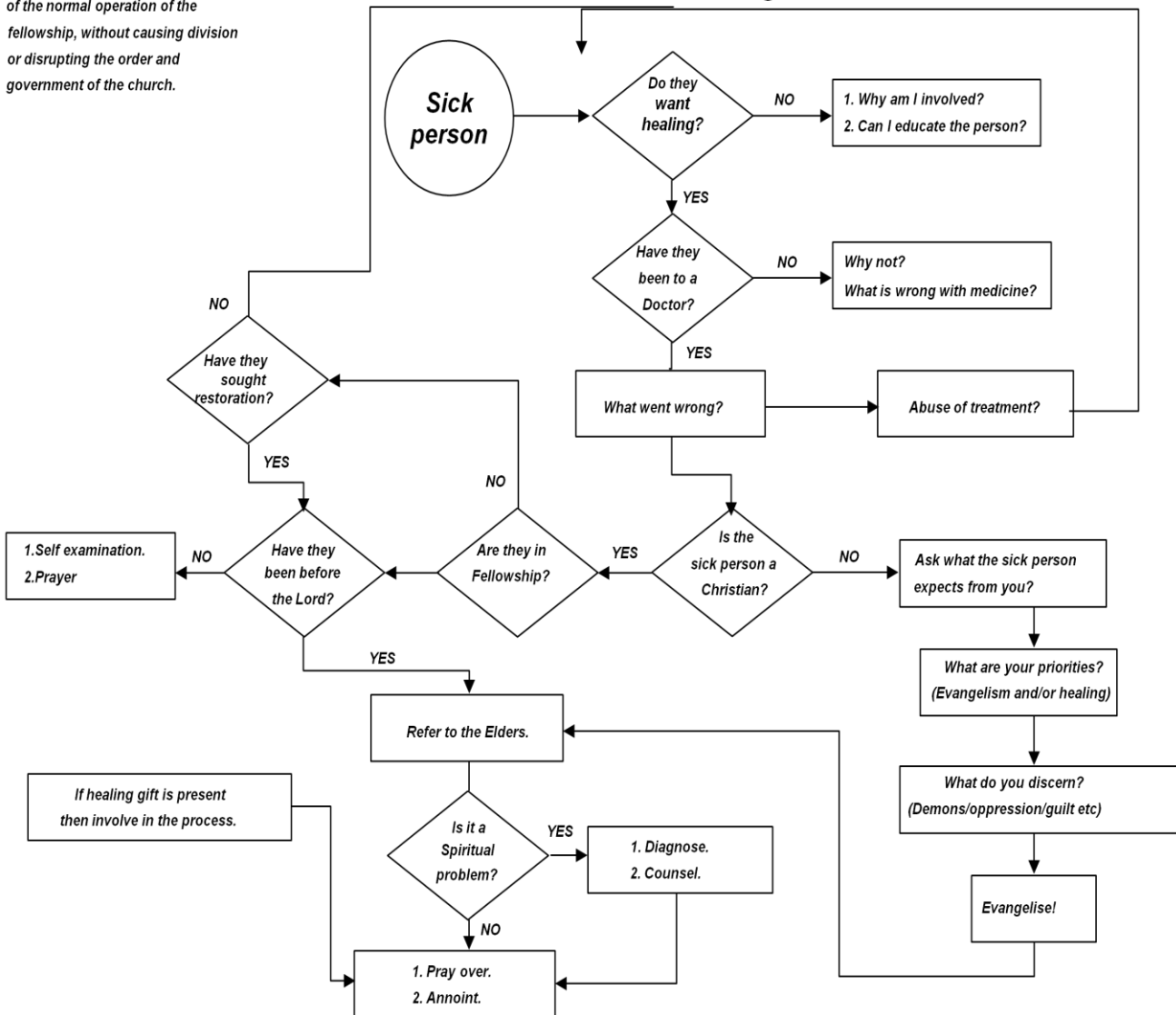
## Healing

The following flowchart has been designed to offer a Biblical diagnostic process towards healing.

Healing should take place as part of the normal operation of the fellowship, without causing division or disrupting the order and government of the church.

### Guidelines in healing

19th November 1991

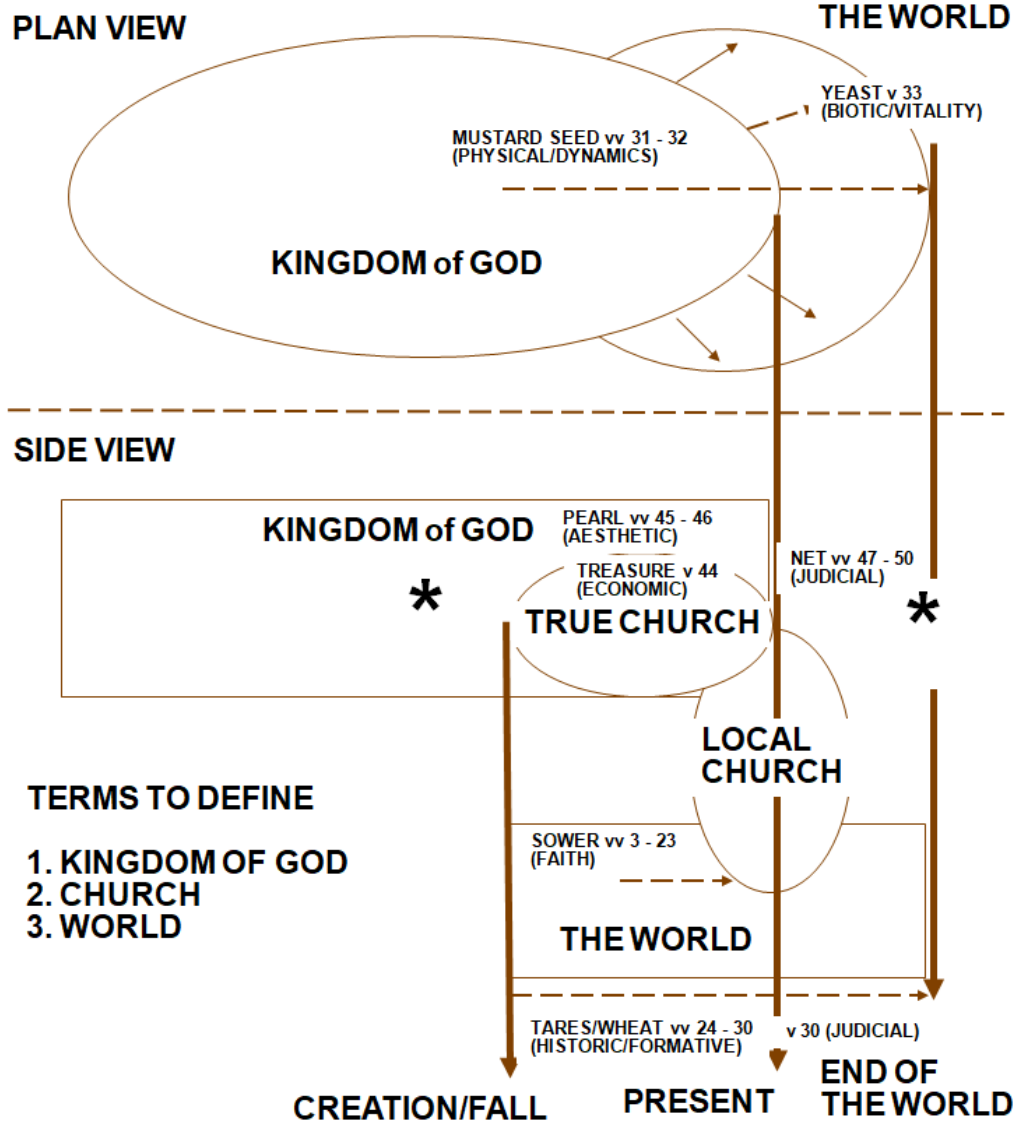


## The Kingdom of God

The following diagram is intended to describe the relationship and interaction between the Church visible (on earth), the Local Church, the Church universal (eternal), and the world.

### CONCEPTS OF THE KINGDOM

MAY 1992

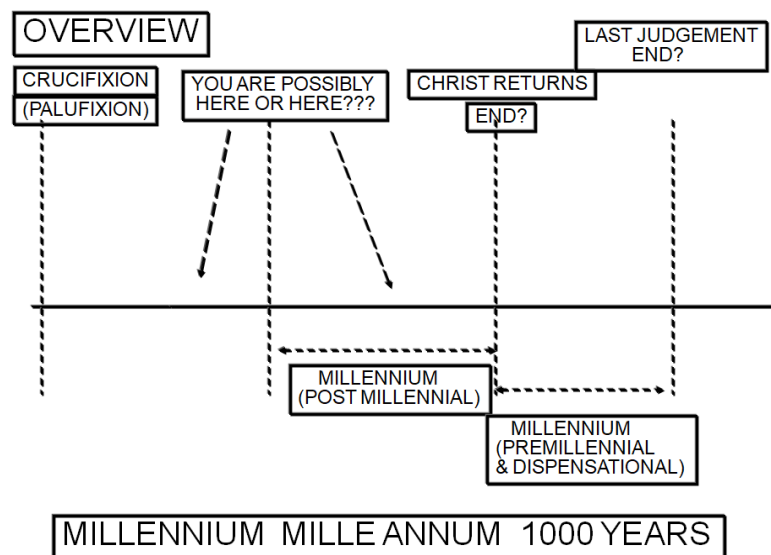




## The Millennium

The subject I now wish to approach comes under the heading "The Millennium" or "Mille Anni". *Rev 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

This is the Latin form of the Greek and means 1,000 years. The Greek uses 'CHILIA', and certain early Christians who had particular views about this subject were called Chiliasts. It is a sensitive subject among Christians and there are different schools of interpretation as you will see. These differences occur I believe, from the starting points of interpretation and where particular aspects of doctrine are emphasised.



One such point is whether we take the scriptures literally or whether we take them spiritually. Another is whether we believe the reign to be on earth or in heaven or both. *Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

Yet another is whether it takes place after the general resurrection or before? By general resurrection I mean the resurrection of all men on the day of judgement. I want to present an overview of the various opinions and interpretations. In subsequent studies I will look at these views

in more details before presenting my own statement of interpretation.

The four major schools of thought are called Pre, post, a-millennialism and Dispensationalism. More fully stated they mean the pre-, post-, a- millennial second coming of Christ and I will briefly illustrate these by a diagram on which I have placed some historical reference points. The reference points are the crucifixion and second coming of Christ. Relative to these points the premillennialist says that the Millennium happens after the coming of Christ and so pre- is used to describe the position of the advent rather than the Millennium. By the same token post- describes the coming of Christ as occurring after the Millennium. A-millennialists hold that there is no Millennium (i.e. the a- is privative) in the sense of a thousand literal years. Dispensationalism is an extreme form of premillennialism held by many of the Brethren and lately Pentecostal assemblies, and holds particular views about a restored natural Israel.

Now you may be puzzling as to why I should go into certain doctrinal views that I hold to be erroneous? I do so to enable you to see the thought process of the adherents to these systems. This will enable you to argue constructively against a false position and it will enlarge your own view about the scope of prophetic interpretation. We shall see where and why Christendom ceases to be united.

There are among many of these groups of thought, common concepts of the Christian faith. For example the same general concept of Christ as a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice as the only ground of salvation, in addition to the belief in a future visible second coming of Christ, a resurrection body, a universal judgement, rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked in hell. Well you may say if they all hold that, is this study really necessary? I say yes, because we shall be looking at distinctive methods of interpretation employed by the various groups as they relate to the time and purpose of Christ's coming and the nature of the kingdom set up by His coming.

These doctrinal positions in turn affect other attitudes in life. Some pre-millennialists and Dispensationalists are very active supporters of earthly Israel and Jewish evangelism. Others who hold that the Church is in decline towards the coming, emphasise a holding action by work in missions and hospitals rather than colleges. A classic example of prophetic motivation was Jimmy Carter's initiative towards Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat in the late 1970's.

It is often disconcerting to the Christian to have presented so many differing views about a Biblical event. It often leads to a lack of confidence in scriptural inspiration, since there is no clear agreeable interpretation. Surely the Bible is confusing? I think not. I believe that the differences in interpretation reflect even among theologians, the frailty of the human condition rather than God's word. *2Pe 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;*

It may also reflect that the Spirit of God has not yet fully revealed His purpose in these words. *2Pe*

*1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 2Pe 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2Pe 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

However, we know that we are on scriptural ground, but dangerous ground at that. With this in mind we shall not make any new doctrine from Revelation chapter 20, rather we shall endeavour to see (as we did elsewhere) in Revelation, an interpretation consistent with what has been revealed elsewhere. By elsewhere, I mean from Genesis through the Gospels to the letters of John and Jude!

The problem with the Millennium is that it is only spoken of here in Revelation chapter 20, the next step is where do we "ram it" into other passages of scripture? Where would we put it? *1Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words..... 1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1Co 15:52 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1Co 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors..... Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. Dan 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the*

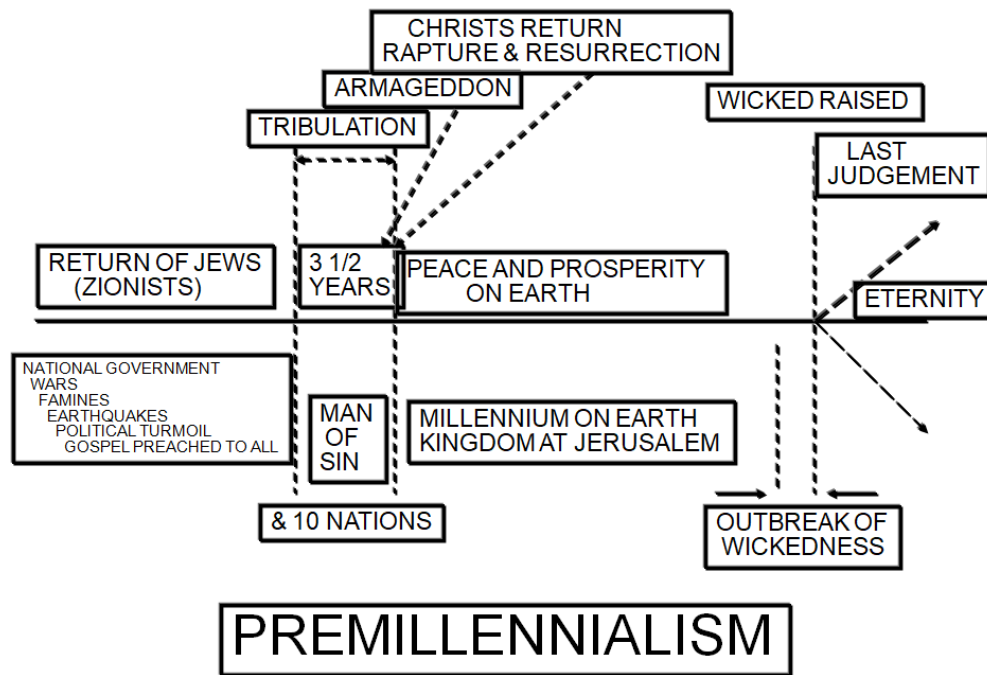
*end of the war desolations are determined. Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate..... Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. Isa 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. Isa 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

It was no justification of Adam's erroneous position to say well "I just believed what I was told". *Gen 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* He harkened to error and was blamed. *Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;* Her views were not God's views. It's your duty to find the mind of the Lord in this matter in which I merely show you my own studied view. Disagree with me by all means but do so from scripture.

## Premillennialism

This view holds that the Lord will return before the Millennium. There is no agreed doctrinal formulation to this view and we shall be looking at generally commonly agreed points. The elements of the system which we shall see elsewhere are:

- The Second Coming
- The Tribulation
- Armageddon
- The Kingdom
- The Millennium
- Final Judgement
- and the order in which we place them



Rapture is not a Biblical word but it expresses the idea. *1Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

The Latin raptor is a snatcher or seizer, hence rapture the act of seizing by force or hurrying along rapidly. If we do not quibble with the word we can accept that there will be a Rapture. In this system it is placed at the end of the current world order and before the Millennium. At the same time believers are translated to glory not secretly but openly. *Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Before this Rapture occurs at the end of the age there is to be a period of tribulation, thorough which the church is to go. The support for this taken from Matthew and Daniel and is not connected with the fall of Jerusalem (AD70) but the end of the age. *Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Dan*

*12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

The tribulation is associated with the period of time when the man of sin, the personal Antichrist holds a reign of terror. He is associated with the revived Roman Empire, 10 nations of central and Southern Europe. *Dan 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. Dan 7:20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.*

Although he may be a ruler at that time, he makes a covenant with the unbelieving Jews in Palestine and breaks it after 3.5 years. The ensuing persecution of the Jews who are shut up in Jerusalem ends with the return of Christ at the battle of Armageddon.

Historic Pre-Millennialism sees a number of events happening at the time of the second coming. Wars, famine, earthquakes, political turmoil, national unrest, preaching of the gospel to all nations, the return of the Jews to Palestine and the setting up of a national government of Palestine. World events are focused by this system in upon the Middle East.

At the culmination of the events of the Tribulation, Rapture and Armageddon there occurs a general resurrection of the Saints, the first resurrection. This is to include the saints of the Old Testament and New Testament. These reign with Christ during the Millennium and at the end of this period a resurrection of the wicked of all ages occurs for judgement and condemnation. *Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years..... 1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 1Co 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death..... 1Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also*

*which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

The Kingdom of God is set up on earth during the period of the Millennium, hence the glory and the accomplishments of it belongs to this future age. The Kingdom, then, is not in the world at this present time, but absent even in the form of the Church. This low view of the Church puts forward the presumptions that the Church is a temporary and interim agency. In doing this, it places the Christian hope in an Earthly Kingdom (future), fostered principally from Old Testament prophecies taken literally, giving hope to the Jews. This however is not the way the New Testament looks at the interpretation of the Old Testament in my opinion.

The age of the Kingdom or Millennial reign is therefore determined as a great age of peace. *Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* It is a time of prosperity. *Isa 60:17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.*

It is a period of long life. *Isa 65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.* The created order will be changed. *Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.....* *Isa 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

Christ will reign as king over the earth directing the affairs of men. At the end of the Millennium a further outbreak of wickedness occurs which ends in the final judgement and resurrection of the wicked.

This has not been an exhaustive study on Pre-Millennium but it sets forth the major tenets of the belief which you will encounter among many Christians.

In order to point you towards a personal analysis of the system, I am going to leave you with some questions to ponder.

They are primarily based upon (Revelation chapter 20) while reading principally Old Testament scriptures into its interpretation and structure.

1. Is the literalism applied to it, particularly from the Old Testament, justified?
2. What is the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God? Is the idea of a postponed kingdom (i.e. to the Millennium) justified?
3. Can we justify the idea of time separation between the coming of Christ, the resurrection, the last judgement and the end of the world or are these events synchronous?
4. Can we connect the events of the second coming with the institution of an earthly Kingdom with its capital in an earthly Jerusalem?
5. Can the risen Saints share the new world with people living in their earthly, sinful state?
6. What is the New Testament position concerning the first resurrection, the second resurrection and the first death?

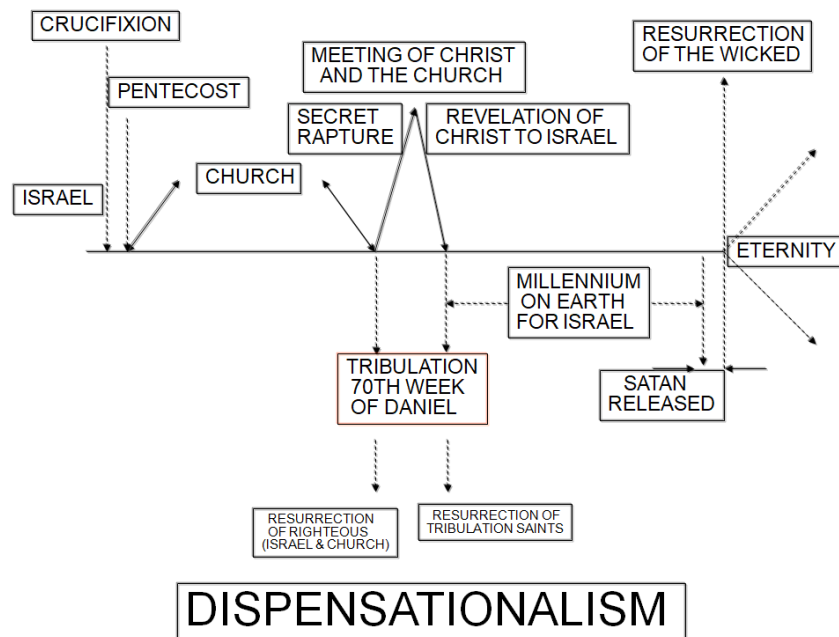
In view of the symbolism in the book of Revelation we are to be very cautious in presenting an interpretation of the last days using this book as the key to the subject. You may find it interesting to do a study of the last days primarily neglecting Revelation and see what view the rest of scripture presents.

## Dispensationalism

In order to understand the nature of error we have to understand the historical background that nurtured it. People who despise church history and biblical history are often the first to repeat error. *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

It should form a part of your devotional reading and I trust that you will become familiar with some of the characters that I will show you today. They have their great points and their weaknesses, their passion and pride, their convictions and their error, so let us learn from them.





Dispensationalism owes a lot to a man called Immanuel Lacunza a South American Roman Catholic priest who according to Andrew Miller (Brethren Historian) published a book in 1812 in Spain called "The coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty". This book reached England in 1827 and was adopted by Edward Irving the eloquent but not always accurate revivalist preacher. In turn it was used at prophetic conferences and became a fundamental source of ideas for the Christian churches.

Lacunza identified the antichrist with a body of people rather than an individual. This body, the apostate clergy of the Church of Rome would form an important role in the events leading up to the Millennium. According to Lacunza the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews led to the transfer of the centre of union of God's people on earth from Jerusalem to Rome, with the Jews temporarily cast off by God (see Romans chapter 11). With the defection of this clergy of Rome, 'the antichrist', the way would be open for the Jews to become the active part of the church and the centre to revert back to Jerusalem.

Now why was this idea a core doctrine of Dispensationalism (and pre-millennialism) so readily accepted? It was put out by a Roman Catholic, a Jesuit (the S.S. of the RC's) and these were the historical enemies of Protestantism. I will speculate.

There was little doubt in the minds of the puritan reformers that the Pope was antichrist. John Trapp (1601-1669) in his commentary on (2 Thessalonians chapter 2) makes this abundantly clear. Speaking on the "falling away" (verse 3), he saw it as the falling away from the Roman Empire, "Daniel, set forth antichrist, typically in that little antichrist Antiochus". Paul in this chapter", going on to say, "so this "man of Sin"(is) that Antichrist of Rome". Trapp makes another very interesting observation, that Solomon's temple was finished in the year of the world 3,000 and destroyed

together with the city in the year of the world exactly 4000, therefore the spiritual temple shall be constituted in 3,000 or perhaps 4,000 years more!

This view of the antichrist permeated the Christian world and there is no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church made efforts to cast off the slur. A man called Alcazar (1554-1613) and Ribera (1537-1591) both Spanish Jesuits argued for a future Antichrist who would be a person not an institution like the papacy. This person they said would rebuild the temple of Jerusalem prescribe the Christian religion, be acknowledged by the Jews, claim to be God and conquer the world all in the space of a literal 3.5 years, This overthrow of the church of Rome would be apostasy - from the pope!!

I think that Lacunza, like these Jesuits was trying to take the heat off of the Pope. This teaching was thus welcome propaganda for the papacy. It is further of note that Lacunza circulated his manuscript under the pseudonym of "Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra", a Hebrew Christian and converted Jew. Why use this deceit other than to gain general acceptance among the other churches of Christendom?

Here in this book, then, was fuel for the fire. At the time it came to prominence in the early 1800's, a revival of Biblical teaching was taking place with a particular emphasis on the second coming. Many men were born at this time who came to prominence in that group that came to be known as the Plymouth Brethren. In some measure we owe them all a debt of gratitude for their labours.

George Muller the founder of the Bristol Orphanages. G. V. (Vicesimus the 20th child) Wigram (b. 1805) whose money and labour have given us the Englishman's Greek and Hebrew Concordances. B. W. Newton (b.1807) descendent of the Quaker George Fox. C. H. Mackintosh (b.1820) Expositor. William Kelly (b.1820), Henry W., Soltau (b.1805) Old Testament Expositor on the Tabernacle. Thomas Newberry (b.1811) who left us a Bible with excellent notes. J. G. Bellet (b.1795) expositor on the person and work of Christ. You will find excellent details on these men in Pickering's volume "Chief men among the Brethren". Of course there were many more and not least and perhaps the greatest J. N. Darby the much maligned power house of the movement. We use his translation of the Bible in our own studies. (It is a very good translation and not a commentary, so it does not propagate his doctrinal error).

Their group of men gathered together in the providence of God to form one of the most powerful teaching ministries of the 1800's with their publication centre at Plymouth, hence the name - Plymouth Brethren.

We cannot properly begin our explanation of the teachings of Dispensationalism without a brief sketch of the life of J. N. Darby. Incidentally, one of the trademarks of brethren books, when you see them in the shops is that they used their initials (i.e. JND), perhaps as a mark of Christian modesty. John Nelson Darby was born in 1800, the nephew of Admiral Darby of the HMS Bellerophon and was a godson of Admiral Nelson, soon to die at Cape Trafalgar. He was born in the same year as E. B.

Pusey the champion of Anglo Catholicism, and died, both in the same year 1882. He was an educated man (Westminster School and Trinity College Dublin) graduating in 1819 as a classical medallist, and commenced work as a lawyer at the Irish Chancery Bar. There is evidence that he was passing through a spiritual crisis, and consequently sought ordination in the Anglican Church, becoming first a deacon in 1825 and priest in 1826. His father promptly disinherited him. As a priest he was untiring among the poor but following a fall from his horse which laid him up for over 3 months he came to some deeper studies and conclusions about the word of God. At this time he began to break with the high church ideas of his contemporaries Newman and Pusey.

Darby made the link with Irvingites at the 'Albury Conference' through the Viscountess Powercourt who had attended it. It was also the introduction to other men who would become chief among the Brethren. (Groves, Bellett, Congleton, Cronin) who met in Dublin. At their own meeting to break bread, Darby broke from the C of E. Darby went to Plymouth, Devon, at the invitation of B.W. Newton and by 1832 a gathering of believers was formed there. An account of one of these meetings is given in Millers Volume "the brethren" (pp 42-45).

These "Fellowship meetings", as they were called, do not differ radically from our own and I am sure that we would have found them a blessing. As this group expanded others were gathered (S.P. Tregelles (of Lexicon fame) the brother-in-law of B.N. Newton; R. C. Chapman at Barnstaple, Craik and Muller at Bristol). There can be little doubt from the lists of names in this early ministry, that the teaching ministry must have been overwhelmingly powerful.

Darby went to the Continent to Evangelise in 1837, and by 1840 had formed several French speaking congregations in Switzerland. Back in Plymouth by 1845 he found a departure from some of the early teachings they held in common (some on prophecy). He withdrew and formed a new company of believers (see chart of the successive splits in 'brief history of the Brethren').

This was the start of a disintegration and reformation of the churches and the start of the exclusive brethren. Bitterness abounded and many friendships were severed permanently. It was not all Darby's fault. There were many strong characters, men clearly used of God, who exercised much grace with their gifts but found no difficulty in putting their clay and iron boots into each other's backside. (See chart of Schisms in 'brief history of the Brethren').

Darby despite the personal attacks that many make against him, was a tireless worker for the Lord. He translated the scripture into French and to German for his congregations there, (from the original Hebrew and Greek). The English version we use came later. He wrote studies for magazines, Synopsis of the Bible, notes and letter and Hymns.

"This World is a wilderness wide!  
I have nothing to seek or to choose  
I've no thought in the waste to abide  
I have naught to regret, nor to lose".

He died in Bournemouth on the 29th April 1882. He lived in the Bible and recommended thinking in scripture. Where did he fail?

There are a number of factors which were influential in the development of the Plymouth Brethren:

- Prophetic revivalism
- Worldliness in the Churches
- Biblical reconsideration of the Church

Darby began to conceive the view that the Church had failed, (letters Vol p 42, 94, 113, 167) in 1840. It was an intuitive view, I think fostered by what he thought he saw in the world around him. The great danger of course is that men interpret the Bible in terms of what they see around them rather than interpreting what they see from the Bible. In this, his view of the Church was not Biblical. We do well to note Paul's statement in Romans. *Rom 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, Rom 9:2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. Rom 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

In mere outward terms Israel had failed to aspire to the grace of God. This was not a failure of the Grace of God or even of Israel, for Paul goes on to re-evaluate Israel in terms of the true and spiritual Israel. No doubt, had Darby applied the Pauline argument to the Church, he too should have concluded that not "all are the church which are of the church".

Having, therefore, relegated the church to the position of failure, what then is the purpose of God in the world today. Here Dispensationalists postulated that the church was a parenthesis (brackets or gap) in the plan of God. It was held to be distinct from the nation of Israel under the Old Testament, for whom God still had a plan, and that this restored Israel would take over from the Church during the Millennium and carry out God's purpose.

It follows in his system, that if there are two groups (the Church and Israel) and that they have different purposes, the essential differences of the two groups must be maintained. This they do by making a difference between the Kingdom of Heaven (for the church) and the Kingdom of God (for Israel). The Church is therefore heavenly and Israel Earthly with an Earthly expectation! This leads to a glaring error relating to the person and work of Christ.

If Israel and the Church are to remain and maintain the distinctions of the two testaments did Christ come to unite the two in one body? No they say! The real purpose of Christ's coming was to establish an earthly kingdom ruled from the literal throne of David (in which all Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled literally). He (Christ) clearly failed to do so hence this is reserved for the Millennium.

Hence in effect, they hold to a postponed Millennium. The rejection by the Jews, of Christ led to his death on the Cross! Therefore in this system the Cross is the failure of God, because man failed to consent, though you may well ask why should it succeed a second time? The other point that naturally arises from this idea is that had the Jews accepted Christ and His Kingdom, then there was no need for the Cross and men would have been saved by legal obedience. Hence the Cross was not essential to salvation (another error).

We have therefore, at the root of Dispensation three fundamental errors:

1. The Church
2. Salvation
3. The Kingdom

Let us therefore begin a corrective view of these errors.

### **The Church.**

The Dispensationalists claim that the Church was not known in the Old Testament. I remember having a discussion with a dear brother (Arnold Shaw, now with The Lord) on this and I pointed out Acts chapter 7 where the word “ekklesia” is used. *Act 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* He could not accept it! In fact the Church is mentioned at the beginning of the Bible and has always been present, typified in marriage. Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh..... Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Eph 5:33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband.

The mystery is clearly revealed. There are not two brides (Israel and the Church) but just one bride! That this body comprises both Jews and Gentiles is expressed. *Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Eph 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; Eph 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

Neither was it God's purpose to use the Old Testament Israel as the instrument of His plan but the Church. *Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

These scriptures and many others undermine the teaching of Dispensationalism, of a "failed church". It is indeed a glorious body. You will see if you think about it, that the error is perpetuated by the method of exposition. The Old Testament is used to interpret the New Testament, rather than letting the New Testament reveal the truth of the Old Testament.

### **Salvation.**

Can we support the idea that men were ever saved by legal obedience to the Mosaic code? The answer is clearly no. If they had value, then continuity was essential for us but clearly they failed. *Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

In this treatise the sacrificial system is designated a "shadow" of something greater. Just as Paul shows the law to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

By the one offering of His body on the tree we have sin dealt with. *Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

You cannot escape the thrust of the New Testament teachings that the Cross was the focal point of the Old Testament and not a mistake. It seems amazing that the Brethren who perhaps have done more than most to set forth the typology of the Old Testament in terms of Christ, should shy away from accepting the necessity of atonement as the design of God's administration.

### **The Kingdom.**

Can we really make a difference in the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven? Compare the following. *Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The **kingdom of heaven** is at hand..... Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach the **kingdom of God**, and to heal the sick.*

Was the ministry towards the perpetuation of two groups? I think not. *Mat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the **kingdom of heaven**. Mat 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the **kingdom of God**.*

The Kingdom of God is not postponed to the Millennium (for Israel on Earth) but was set forth by signs and wonders for the world during Jesus ministry. *Mat 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Mat 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, Mat 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Mat 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: Mat 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Mat 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me..... Isa 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness..... Isa 35:4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Isa 35:6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.*

John the Baptist was not mistaken and he did not have to look to the future for a successful Messiah. The Messiah was here.

Without wishing to go too far into the details of Dispensationalism, I will sketch for you the outcome of the system, following on from these cardinal errors and the insistence upon Old Testament literalism. You will see that it is similar to Pre-Millennialism, although Pre-Millennialists do not openly confess to these fundamental errors.

I should also perhaps state that the term Dispensationalism came into existence and gained popularity through the efforts of one Cyrus Ingerson Scofield. Scofield (b. 1843) was converted in 1879 and within 3 years was ordained as a congregational minister. Without formal training he proceeded to write his reference Bible, which popularised Darby's teaching. This Bible was the Authorised Version with explanatory notes and did much to put the Dispensationalist teachings to the forefront.

In this book the Bible was restructured to explain seven Dispensations or ways that God governed the world (p 149-150 Boettner, the Millennium). This of course is a quite arbitrary system with no clear back up from the Bible. It is wishful thinking. Oak trees from little apples growing.

Thus Dispensationalism as a system was founded with its equally arbitrary and very complex view of eschatology (meaning 'last things' see accompanying diagram and compare with Pre-millennialist view). It takes a very legal and complicated mind to unravel and I fear one cannot accept it.

If there is one thing I have found in my study of scripture it is that God's plan is childishly simple. *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This does not mean that it is not profound and magnificent in its conception. It is altogether glorious and more so for its simplicity. *1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1Co 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 1Co 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

Does it not strike you as strange that, that which has proceeded so smoothly and simply from the beginning should become so very difficult and complicated at the end? Bear this in mind!

One of the reasons that I am labouring over prophetic views in this study, is to put you all on guard. To cause you to see, that prophecy when handled apart from a consistent Biblical approach to revelation in general, causes repercussions in other areas of well established theology. Well might we say with Paul "O foolish Galatians", " Who has bewitched you?" *Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

And are we any the less guaranteed that we shall not fall into like errors? Are we saying that we have the truth and others do not? No, for we too are frail flesh and must take heed lest when we think we stand we too fall!

Do not however despise men like Darby, who with the early Brethren held a sincere love of Christ and the saints and spent their lives in His service. They merely illustrate human weakness of which we are prone. It is seen too often in the scriptures in the lives of Abraham, David, Peter, but God did not cast them off. Their failures however, were not the failure of the word of God, but the failure to accept the word of God for what it is.

## Postmillennialism

We move away from the fantastic realm of the Dispensationalist to a more orthodox view of the end times, namely, post-millennialism. This view you will recall looks to the coming of Christ



immediately after (post) the Millennium. It too has different forms, the older Augustinian form, holding the idea that the church would eventually rule on earth (a future view) and another holding it to be past with its blessings still being experienced. The Augustinian view (more common) is seemingly in line with the thoughts of Revelation. *Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

The key idea of post-millennialism is that the second coming is preceded by a golden age where the gospel holds sway over the whole earth in an unprecedented way. This doesn't mean that everyone will be converted but that the race of man-kind as a whole shall be saved. There is certainly much evidence in the bible to support this idea. *Psa 86:9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name..... Psa 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Psa 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession..... Psa 86:9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. Psa 100:1 **A Psalm of praise.** Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.*

Paul in Corinthians suggests the idea of the advancing kingdom of God. *1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 1Co 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 1Co 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 1Co 15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 1Co 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

This is in perfect harmony with the vision of the Old Testament in Daniel, when he interprets the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known*

*to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

This idea of universalism certainly seems to have a foundation, although it doesn't mean the conversion of all nations. *Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.* True, the world is the object of Christ's redemption. *1Jn 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world..... 1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world..... Joh 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

However, a careful exegesis of verses much favoured by evangelicals does not show the extent of redemption, but the manner in which God's love is manifested. *Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Joh 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* Likewise the parable of the leaven doesn't mean that the wheat is turned into leaven. this shows the penetrating power of the kingdom, not the converting power. *Mat 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

This must cause us to think about the purpose of the gospel. Is it for the purpose of converting men or calling them out? It is not merely the preaching of the word but the effectual application of the word by the Holy Spirit. We must determine not the universality of the preaching (which is clear) but the universality of the effectual application, before we can say that it is God's purpose to convert the whole world. A look at Paul's preaching on Mars hill (Acts chapter 17) shows the universality but non-effect of the message.

I must also point out in considering the preaching of the gospel, that it carries in it (when preached correctly) not only universal redemption but universal condemnation. *Mar 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

When we view the concept of judiciary, it holds two principles, namely blessing and curse. This is taught by Paul in Romans. *Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* There is no reason to see the reign of Christ in different terms.

It has often been in my mind how quickly the nation of England reverted to formalism and Papism after the Puritan Commonwealth. It virtually happened overnight. One might have considered the Commonwealth as the start of the Millennium with its strong Christian bias. Yet it is clear that many of the people were held in submission, not voluntarily, and were only too ready to jump at the chance to throw it off. Read Pepys, to get a contemporary view. You see, it is possible to gain a semblance of religious conformity by the power of government, but this does not mean spiritual conformity and mass conversion.

We should not however, even if we do not hold to a concept of universal salvation, diminish our efforts in preaching a universal gospel. It is not the outcome of the task that should govern our motives. The outcome is not our business but God's. Like Paul, we must know our place in the plan of redemption. *1Co 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? 1Co 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 1Co 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 1Co 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 1Co 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

The post-millennial view holds that the world is getting better (page 38 Boettner, The Millennium) and becoming 'Christianised'. Rushdoony writes the foreword in Marcellus Kik's book dealing with the post-millennialist view (An Eschatology of Victory). For him (page ix) this doctrinal view is essential to the triumph of Christ. I must admit though, without this introduction, I would have thought that the book was a treatise on Amillennialism. That apart, I sense in a lot of the writing of Rushdoony, which I agree with and find edifying, that he is looking more towards the legal application of righteousness through the application of the Law of Moses. I am beginning to have doubts about this approach. I do not see the mission of Christ as one which advances the Mosaic Law. The New Covenant is not a covenant of law but a covenant with Christ. The law is a school master to bring us to Christ. *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

A Christian legalised world is not the goal of Christianity. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: Rom 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Christianity is not content to see mere outward conformity.

It is this spiritual dimension that is often missing in the idea of a Christianised world. The world is clearly bigger than the visual dimension attached to it by so many. *Eph 5:11 And have no fellowship*

*with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Eph 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. Eph 5:13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Eph 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Eph 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

You must then ask yourselves if you support this view, is the kingdom of God advancing to a greater victory over the world of men? Is there going to be a greater awareness of the power and rule of Christ? What does He say Himself concerning His coming? *Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Mat 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Mat 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

Does He come to a watching world or a world still in part oblivious to the signs of the times, just as in Noah's day? Are the tares suppressed by the power of the Godly wheat? *Mat 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; Mat 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; Mat 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

## Worship

Corporate worship must by definition must encourage the participation of all present otherwise there is no point in coming together.

The primary corporate function is to remember the death and resurrection of Christ. This is expressed in the Lord's Table and the accompanying praise, teaching, exhortation, prophecy and mutual edification. Edification or building up the body is the motivating principle, 'let all things be done for edification'.

When we come together it should not be without preparation. We should ask ourselves 'why am I going?', 'do I intend to edify those present?', 'am I prepared to participate?', 'am I sensitive to the

moving of the Holy Spirit on this occasion?', 'have I asked the Lord for specific direction?', 'have I something in my life that will inhibit worship?' The list can be extended.

Sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit is essential to the gathering. If the meeting is planned to the extent that a programme dominates then it is probable that the worship is being directed by a single individual rather than the body of believers present. While we may prepare as individuals the time we set aside at the start is a valuable 'link' period, where we can assess the relevance to the leadings we feel. It may serve to redirect or re-emphasise some aspects of what we have brought with us or to give way to another who has something more relevant.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult things to do. That is to give way to someone else. We may have been greatly blessed by a hymn for instance. This came to us during the week at a time of need and it has been in our minds and on our lips giving us great joy. Of course, we want to share it with our brethren and hope that it will bless them as it has blessed us, so we programme it in to the worship. Yet do we consider that the circumstances of those present did not match ours during the week and that they might just be left wondering 'well what is the relevance of that to this meeting?'

We no doubt have a genuine and well intentioned motive for bringing what we bring but others may not see it that way. If we still feel that we should play our hymn it would be wise to share the total experience and then perhaps sit and listen to the words and music.

Exposing ourselves to others is a prime part of fellowship. If I cannot share a total experience it is wrong to expect some kind of telepathy to bridge the gap. The Apostle expresses fellowship as 'that which we have seen and heard we declare to you'.

## Praise

Who is in charge of praise in the New Testament church? The answer is the Holy Spirit, since true praise should be the pouring forth of the Spirit through our lives. *1Pe 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

It is not dissimilar to prayer except that it is often accompanied by some instrumentation (Psalm 150). It should also be associated with Gods personal dealing in our corporate or personal lives. For example the Song of Moses and Miriam, the praise of Anna and Mary. *Luk 2:38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Luk 1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,*

Hymns and prayer should have relevance to us as a local community and reflect God's nature, His dealings with us and our walk with Christ (Psalm 145). The 'Mission Praise Song Book' was compiled to "enable the uniting power of music to operate during and after Mission England". It was relevant to that crusade.

Many hymns have been written to commemorate or reflect upon sacred events in the lives of individuals. Toplady's famous "Rock of Ages" was inspired while sheltering from a storm in the cleft of a rock and written on the back of a six of diamonds playing card. P.P. Bliss penned "Hallelujah, what a Saviour" after hearing a ministry on 'Jesus the man of sorrows' at the Jackson State prison in Michigan. Spafford's "It is well with my Soul" flowed from the tragic loss of his family at sea, with music by Bliss who two weeks later was taken to glory after a train accident.

Some writers are more prolific than others. Watts is credited with 200 hymns (written in less than two years), 6,500 are attributed to Charles Wesley and Fanny Crosby the blind hymn-poetess completed at least 8,000 'singable' hymns. It has been estimated that over 3,000,000 hymns have been written in the history of the Christian church. There is still room for more!

What should govern our choice?

With so much to choose from, what considerations should govern our choice in our worship? Firstly, hymns should express our relationship to God and therefore be correct in their teaching. They should be doctrinally sound.

Secondly, they should be relevant to our immediate circumstance and appropriate to the worship. It might be insensitive perhaps to sing "Oh, happy Day", when someone has announced the loss of a loved one or "Fight the good Fight" at a marriage feast. Choosing hymns just to fill slots in worship, the proverbial 'hymn sandwich', betrays a lack of sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit.

Thirdly, all aspects of worship must involve edification. *1Co 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.* This is the building up and encouraging of Christians. The words and music of hymns can do this but remember, if people do not understand the reason for your choice in worship how can they enter the same mind to praise with you? It is not unlike a tongue without interpretation which edifies the speaker but leaves the hearer in the dark. *1Co 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*

It should also be born in mind that not all hymns are directed at praising The Lord. There is also an element of praise whereby we encourage each other in our Faith, for example "Onward Christian Soldiers" is one of mutual encouragement in Christian warfare. We should be aware of this distinction in the service of worship and make due allowance for it.

Please feel free to add to this handbook or adapt it for personal use.